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THE ATTRACTIONS

OF

THE NILE AND ITS BANKS

By REV. ALFRED CHARLES SMITH, M.A

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOLUME II.

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VILLAGE IN EGYPT NEAR EKHMIM (p. 37)

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET
1868

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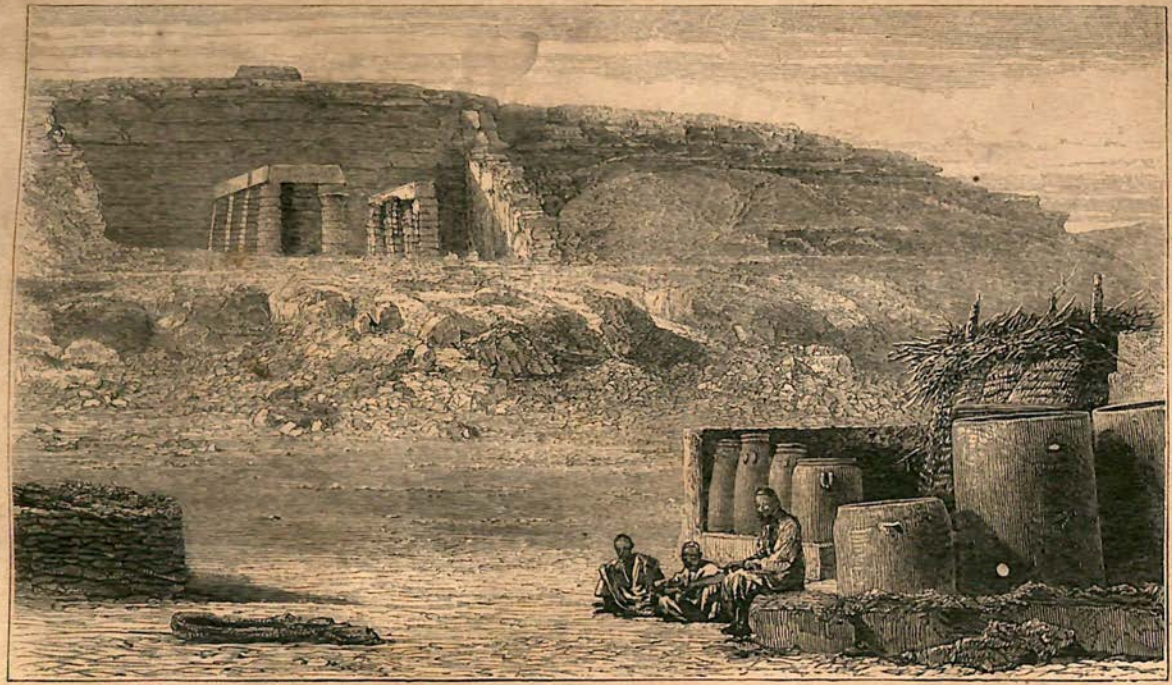

VILLAGE IN NUBIA AND RO[illegible] TEMPLE OF [illegible] (p. 27).

THE NILE AND ITS BANKS

A JOURNAL OF

TRAVELS IN EGYPT AND NUBIA

SHOWING

THEIR ATTRACTIONS TO THE ARCHÆOLOGIST

THE NATURALIST AND GENERAL TOURIST

BY REV. ALFRED CHARLES SMITH, M.A.

CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD: RECTOR OF YATESBURY, WILTS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOLUME II

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET

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ATTRACTIONS

OF

THE NILE AND ITS BANKS.

CHAPTER I.

THE PASSAGE OF THE CATARACTS.

No sooner was our boat made fast to the bank at Assouan, than Braheem began to bargain with the sheikhs of the Cataract for our passage up. There are four of these gentry, and they soon came on board, attended by at least a dozen more coal-black Nubians, for the ostensible purpose of examining the boat, and pronouncing on her fitness to ascend the cataracts, but in reality from curiosity, and in hopes of tobacco, brandy, and backsheesh. As we were destined to become very well acquainted with these sheikhs, and under other than ordinary circumstances, I may as well introduce them to the reader. Their names were Sheikh Hassan, Sheikh Ali, Sheikh Suleiman, and Sheikh Ibrahim. They

were all fine men, strong, and above the ordinary height; and as we had the pleasure of their company for days, during a great part of which they were either in the water, or on the rocks, divested of all clothing, we had ample opportunity for admiring the great muscular bodies, and the strength of limb, which these well-formed men possessed. Hassan had an honest, truthful expression of countenance, but he was in such ill health that he could take no active part in working the boat, and we saw him no more after this first interview. Ali was a thin sharp-featured man, energetic even beyond the others, plausible and smooth-tongued, generally the spokesman for the rest; but, as we afterwards experienced, cunning, deceitful, and utterly regardless of truth. Suleiman was an immense man, broad-shouldered, extremely tall and powerful; but he was taciturn, and had a sullen, almost ferocious look, when anything went wrong. However he was always exerting himself to the utmost at the most difficult points, and it was generally due to his energy, backed by his great strength, when we were extricated from any more than commonly awkward position. Ibrahim was quiet and gentle, when compared to his companions, and did his work without so many loud professions, such gesticulations and

antics as the rest, but the part he took (at least in the upward passage) was generally that of a subordinate rather than of a sheikh, and he worked at the ropes with a will, and thus set an example which perhaps was better than all the loud commands, entreaties, threatenings and vociferations of his brother sheikhs. When these worthies had thoroughly surveyed the 'Southern Cross' from end to end, and had declared her competent to make the ascent and descent of the Great Cataract, it took two days to go through the preliminary steps towards a bargain. Then they all adjourned with Braheem to the house of the Governor of Assouan, there to make the agreement and sign the contract. This was a work of time and difficulty, and required more patience and firmness than our fiery dragoman possessed, for the Cataract sheikhs, like many other natives of Egypt, have learnt to become more and more extortionate and rapacious every year, and it is only by determined opposition and decided refusal that their excessive demands can be resisted. Accordingly, we soon received a message from Braheem, entreating that one of us would come to the rescue; and when F. complied with his request, and appeared on the scene, it was only by dint of storming at the outrageous sums these harpies

required, and threatening not to go up the Cataract at all, but to turn back at once towards Cairo, that they moderated their requirements; and at length, after much altercation and bargaining in true Eastern style, the agreement was concluded and signed; the sheikhs undertaking to start that afternoon, and accomplish the ascent by the morrow evening, and poor Braheem obliged to promise no less than fifteen pounds, exclusive of backsheesh, for the passage up and down. I have no doubt that here, as owner of the boat, our dragoman was at a great disadvantage: the sheikhs have the dahabeahs so completely in their power, and also have the reputation, whether it be true or false, of being so vindictive as to suffer a boat to go upon the rocks, to her great injury, if they are not sufficiently paid, that one sees the dilemma in which the poor owner is placed, when bargaining to pass his boat up the Cataract.

In the afternoon a crowd of Nubians, including the three Cataract sheikhs came on board, and immediately we cast off our moorings, and sailed with a gentle breeze through the granite rocks, which are here much scored with hieroglyphics. The Nubians quite filled our boat, squatting on the main-deck and quarter-deck in all positions, and as they

had nothing else to do, chattered and laughed incessantly. They are certainly a very fine set of men, and compare favourably with the Egyptians: moreover, their shining black skins, set off with the white robe or *abbas*, and the dignified manners most of them possess, were a novelty in our eyes, accustomed as we were to the brown-skinned crouching fellaheen of Egypt. Guided by a Nubian pilot, we passed quietly through a somewhat intricate channel amidst sunken boulders of granite; and anchored for the night at a sand-bank, at the foot of the first rapid. Here the Nubians left us, promising to return at daybreak with a sufficient number of men to drag our boat up the successive falls. Though moored to a large island we were in the middle of the river, which here spreads out to a considerable width, the stream being divided into many channels by rocks and sand-banks, which stretch themselves all over the bed of the Nile, and compel the king of rivers to seek his way in a broken course, and by many devious and narrow paths. That night we had a glorious moon, which lit up the strange scene by which we were surrounded; the rushing water tearing down the rapids just above us; the black rocks and the yellow sand all around, while the distant roar of the larger

Cataracts above heightened the effect; and the 'Southern Cross' lying at anchor in the middle of the channel of the Nile, far away from any human habitation, as if reposing before the great conflict with the rapids to-morrow, and gathering strength preparatory to the straining and heaving she must undergo, ere she can float in the smooth waters off Philæ.

Next morning we were up betimes, and everything was made snug on board, loose objects collected from the floors of the cabins and saloons, and placed out of reach, a precautionary measure always adopted, in anticipation of a good deal of water being shipped. Then we ground our teeth in helpless indignation, as hour after hour of the bright morning passed away, and those mendacious sheikhs and their attendant myrmidons never appeared till past ten o'clock. At last they arrived, and then from all sides in small parties of three, or two, or singly, some wading through the shallow water, some swimming with their only robe wound round their head as a turban, some on logs, the men who were to take part in the day's work came in. Now they firmly fastened two long and very stout ropes to the boat, and to each of these from forty to fifty Nubians attached themselves in two

long files on the rocks on either side of the rapid, in order to pull the dahabeah by main force up the stream. This is the identical plan which Herodotus describes as pursued in his day for hauling a boat up these cataracts: 'As one advances (he says) beyond Elephantine the land rises; hence it is necessary in this part of the river to attach a rope to the boat on each side, as men harness an ox, and so proceed on the journey. If the rope snaps, the vessel is borne away down stream by the force of the current.' And so, exactly after the same method pursued for hundreds of years without interruption, from the days of Herodotus to our own, we found ourselves slowly advancing up the rapids. With two sheikhs on board, and one on shore, and not only the sheikhs, but every man and boy present, shouting, screaming, gesticulating, directing, ordering; with such a din and clamour rising above the noise of the rushing water, as baffles all description, and would have rendered it utterly impossible to hear the commands of the sheikhs, supposing for a moment (though the supposition is ridiculous) that any one would dream of obeying the direction of another, when it is evident that the regular practice is for every man to do as

seems right in his own eyes, and to work wholly irrespective of what others are doing around him; little by little, now a foot or two, now hardly an inch, now halting altogether, now going back a few feet, which it had taken so much time and pains to advance, and which could only be recovered with renewed exertion, we gradually warped up the first rapid. Then a little rest and a good deal of conversation among the blackies, and we gently poled on to the foot of the second rapid, which proved the most impetuous and steep we encountered all day. Again the Nubians harness themselves to the ropes as before; again the sheikhs occupy their places, but now one on deck, and one on either bank; and then for two whole hours, which we spent in ascending this rapid, the scene and the noise cannot be told; we were in the very middle of a very serious cataract, the water roaring all round and below us, the Nubians straining at their ropes, which from time to time they held taut by warping round a rock; and anon gained a few feet, and then warped as before. There were always four or five men on either side, including the sheikhs, stripped, and in the water, directing the ropes, or passing them over the boulders, and it was grand to see these active

well-made amphibious fellows dash into the boiling stream, seize the rope as they are swept past, dive down as they hold on to it, and free it where it has become entangled in a rock below the surface. Then they bound over the rushing water from stone to stone, gesticulating frantically with both arms uplifted on high, screeching at the highest pitch of their voices, apparently maddened for the nonce. During all this excitement, one would-be conductor, standing on the highest point of rock at hand, violently waved a red flag to and fro, wherewith I don't doubt he imagined he was directing the whole progress, though I question if he was remarked by any but ourselves. Then, when we seemed incapable of stemming the violence of the current, but, with all the exertions of the men, remained immoveable, or rather slipped back than advanced, one of the sheikhs seized a handful of sand, and cast it high in the air, and this he repeated several times, for it is an understood signal that more help is needed, and those on the look-out at a distance hurry down to give aid. Meanwhile Sheikh Ali on board is behaving like a lunatic, now shouting, with both arms aloft, in encouraging strain, now in despair dashing off his turban, and casting it on the deck, and ready to

tear his hair in his excitement, only that providentially his crown is shaven; then while two files of men are doing their utmost in straining with all their might at the big cable, our impetuous sheikh beats time with a rope's end on the deck, and from time to time feigns to flog one and another in his fury. And so with such a din and such screeching as only a hundred Nubian throats can utter, another large rapid is passed, and we subsequently surmount several of inferior force after a similar fashion.

And now we are within sight of the Upper Cataract, and not far from Mahatta, the village which lies just above, and were calculating on anchoring off Philæ that evening, when to our inexpressible vexation and disgust, we saw ourselves at half-past four on a brilliant afternoon, made fast to a rock, and condemned to pass another night in the middle of the rapids. Of course we summoned the sheikhs, expostulated, threatened, insisted, but all to no purpose; we were powerless in the hands of these men, and if they chose to detain us here for a week, we were at their mercy, and must submit. Moreover Braheem, always bearing in mind the power of these half-savage sheikhs to take vengeance on his unoffending boat, was

afraid to speak out, and, we shrewdly suspect, softened down all the violent remonstrances we made, as he translated our angry words into smooth Arabic. So here for the second evening we are moored to a large black rock, where we can land, and whence we can bathe in the river; and certainly our rocky islet in the very midst of the wildest portions of the cataract, with the big fall called '*El Bab*' (the gate), above us, is a famous spot for a compulsory halt, with the bright moon shining overhead. Nor were we wanting in lively and novel scenes, wherewith to beguile our leisure; very soon boys and men came riding on logs down the rapids, shooting over the most tumultuous spots, where the fiercest rushes were to be found, sometimes submerged and apparently half-drowned, but never failing to come up again quickly for backsheesh. These logs are round and very thick, and about four feet in length. Upon one of these a man will sit, with his legs stretched straight before him, and balancing himself in some inconceivable manner, (for he must by practice have attained such a firm seat as any English foxhunter would envy,) he will shoot the largest cataracts, and not be daunted by even '*El Bab*' itself. Others would come down the rapids without

logs, swimming amidst the troubled waters, battling with the swirling eddies, extricating themselves with a few rapid strokes from the most awkward under-currents, and then skip over the rocks, demanding backsheesh for their prowess, and grinning from ear to ear, as the smallest coin more than satisfied their modest expectations, and sent them away contented and rejoicing over their gains. One man came swimming on his log across the river, paddling with his hands, as he propelled himself over the stream, and as he drew near asked us to buy a fish which he had caught. As we saw that he was perfectly naked, and that he had nothing in his hands, we could not conceive where he had stowed his goods, till on lifting one foot off the log, we perceived that the fish had by means of a string passed through its gills, been tied to the great toe of its captor; and so our fishmonger with praiseworthy forethought kept his fish cool as he *towed* it through the water to his customers' kitchen. We ate this fish, as we did many others of various sorts during the voyage; but the Nile fish are all poor, tasteless, and full of bones. I believe as a general rule that good fish invariably belong to cold water, and that, tepid as the Nile so often is, under the burning

suns of that southern latitude, it would be unreasonable to expect other than insipid fish; at all events such we invariably found them to be, when from time to time they appeared on the table, either at Cairo or on board the 'Southern Cross.'

Before the sheikhs left us, they had again protested vehemently, one after another, that they would certainly be back at dawn of day; and when we altogether refused credence to those who had so shamefully deceived us in the morning, Ali came forward and swore by Allah, by Mohammed, and lastly, most solemn oath of all, by the beard of Mohammed, and by the beard of Braheem, which he seized as he uttered his oath, that this time we should have no cause of complaint; sunrise would find them all at their posts, and by ten in the morning we should be fairly above the Cataracts; and so they left us, not however this time deceived, for we knew our men now, and we were prepared to enjoy the strange scene around us that evening, and wait the arrival of our deliverers in the morning with what patience we could summon. It was well we fortified ourselves with such philosophic resolutions; for we had spent the whole morning exploring the many channels of the Nile whereby it rushes down the rapids; and I had succeeded in

shooting several specimens of a wagtail peculiar to this portion of the river, and mid-day was past, before the sheikhs and their followers appeared. Nor did it seem to strike any one of them, not even the perjured Ali, that they had failed to keep their appointment, or that we had cause for complaint: indeed so utterly unknown among them is the value of time, and so exceptional is it with any of them to keep their word, that in all probability it never occurred to them that we had expected them earlier, or were annoyed at the delay; for to their own countrymen such delay would be a matter of perfect indifference, and doubtless they not only failed to appreciate, but even to comprehend at all, what they would consider the troublesome hurrying and wonderful impatience of Europeans. We however had ample cause for desiring no unnecessary hindrances in our journey, for not only the season was getting late and the river would be low even under the most favourable circumstances, before we could reach Cairo; but as we were paying a very heavy sum to our dragoman for every day spent in this river cruise, we were mulcted severely in a financial point of view, whenever we came to a purposeless halt. There are always in every Nile tour an incredible number

of obstacles to advance, over which the traveller has no control, and which the Arab sailors allege, justly or unjustly, as a sufficient excuse for a halt; these we were quite prepared to encounter; but to be kept in the cataract the better part of three days at the caprice of the lazy, lying Nubians, who, if they had pleased, might easily have warped our boat to the top in half a day, was vexatious in the extreme. Wherefore when Ali and the other sheikhs presented themselves with salaams at half-past twelve in the day, they were not received with smiles of welcome, but with indignant looks and angry reproaches at the ill-treatment we considered we had suffered at their hands. We might have reserved our anger for a better occasion, for I believe the cause of it was from first to last wholly incomprehensible to those half-savage niggers. And now we loosened from our moorings, and advanced a short distance, but soon came to a halt, while we awaited the arrival of more men; for the last rapid was the most severe of all, hence it is called '*El Bab*,' as conducting into or out of the Cataracts. So dust is again thrown into the air, as the signal for the rendezvous, and when a sufficient staff of assistants had joined us, we were once more in motion, and in commotion even

greater than that of the previous day. On this occasion I landed on the rock to watch the progress of the boat from the shore; and a strange and exciting scene it was: the sheikhs gesticulating with the most frantic energy, screeching at the top of their voices; the two files of men on shore straining at the ropes; our own sailors on deck warping us along with their own rope made fast to a boulder ahead: our reis Abdullah always on the watch at the extreme bow, ready with his pole to break the force of any accidental collision with a rock: our trusty reis Mohammed always in his place at the rudder, and always right with his suggestions, supposing that any voice could be heard amid the uproar; or if heard, would be attended to by those independent niggers. Lazy rascals many of them were too, for as I walked by the side of the long line, yelling at the top of their voices—for they could all do that—and pretending to be tugging their utmost, I could see that a large proportion of them never pulled an ounce, though they had hold of the rope, and seemed to be straining with the rest. Others however were bold and active and energetic in the extreme, and as they dashed into the rapids, and swam across from rock to rock, wherever their services were most

needed, or ran along the slippery rocks amidst the foaming water with their ropes, I thought that if we could have weeded out three-fourths of our helpers, rejected the drones and retained the workers only, we should have ascended the Cataracts in much less time, and with infinitely less confusion and noise.

Owing to the many delays experienced before we made our final start it was half-past four when we reached the top of '*El Bab*' and soon after moored in smooth water, to recover from the exertion, and to dismiss the Nubians. They were not to be fully paid until they had conducted us down the Cataract and back to Assouan on the return voyage, but they crowded on deck, chattering to one another, and screaming for backsheesh, till the whole boat literally rang with that odious word, and every available space on board was filled with their black forms. At last, gratified with a little money, and appeased at the prospect of more when we came back, we saw them to our great joy depart in different directions; some swimming across the river, some paddling on logs, some stalking with dignified steps over the rocks; and then as we sailed away quietly through the magnificent scenery of granite boulders and bold cliffs

which hem in the river on either side, and anchored for the night near the beautiful island of Philæ as the sun set in its usual splendour behind the mountains, the contrast from the din and bustle of the Nubians to the stillness which now reigned on board, and from the wild rocks and rushing waters of the cataracts, to the peaceful repose of Philæ, was refreshing and gratifying in the extreme.

CHAPTER II.

NUBIA—PHILÆ TO WADY HALFEH.

IMMEDIATELY above the Cataracts lies the village of Mahatta, where we enter the confines of Nubia. This is a great emporium of trade from the south, since the passage of the Cataracts, involving so much risk and expense, as well as loss of time, is not to be thought of by the ordinary *murkab* or trading vessel; hence there are many of these native boats which ply between the first and second Cataracts; and as dates form a large staple of the southern produce, we see on the water's edge at Mahatta huge piles of this fruit, dried and heaped up in enormous quantities; and various kinds of corn similarly exposed, since no dread of rain or damp deters the merchant from leaving his goods uncovered beneath the Nubian sky as long as suits his convenience; and as he wraps himself in his *abbas*, and so passes the night as well as the day near his property, generally in company with

several huge and savage mastiffs, which abound in Nubia even to a greater extent than in Egypt, he has no fear of a midnight marauder.

A very short distance hence lies the island of Philæ, which is unquestionably the most picturesque spot we have seen on the Nile. It is completely covered with ruins, chiefly of the great temple of Isis; and pylons, propylons, corridors, arcades, courts, and halls, stud the whole island in great profusion; but strange to say, they have the appearance of having been built without much order, and with a lack of general design; even the propylons or pyramidal towers and courts are not opposite to one another, and the long but elegant lines of corridors do not run quite parallel to each other; but this 'symmetrophobia,' as it has been styled, of the Egyptian architects, is not peculiar to the buildings of Philæ, though I think it has been carried to a greater extent there than elsewhere. One can scarcely comprehend the meaning of such want of symmetry, which to our eyes is so offensive and seems such a palpable defect; neither is the divergence from the straight line so great as to warrant any theory of deliberate plan, which the ruined state of the buildings forbids us to trace; but rather would give the idea of a mistake on the

part of the builders, did not the same strange defect appear in other instances, as at the temple palace of Old Goorneh and others.

We spent one of our spare days, while Braheem was arranging with the Cataract sheikhs, in thoroughly exploring the ruins of this notorious island, riding out to it from Assouan by a short cut through the desert, and crossing over to it in a small boat. Without doubt there is a great deal to admire in detail, and it is a spot most fertile in subjects for the photographer and artist, and the famous hypæthral temple called 'Pharaoh's bed' is a striking object from every point; still at first sight I own to a feeling of disappointment with Philæ; and I confess, perhaps to my shame, that as we wandered over it, it did not come up to my expectations. But then one is accustomed to hear people rave about this island, and lavish such extraordinary praises upon it, that anticipation is screwed up too high, and as a necessary consequence, the reality falls short of the imagined standard. I should scarcely have had the courage to venture on so heterodox a statement, when all the world unites in praising this gem of the river as a jewel without a flaw, but that I am supported by the casual remark of the accurate Dean

Stanley, that in his opinion 'Philæ is more curious than beautiful,' and so I am emboldened to enter a protest against the too extravagant laudations poured upon it from all quarters. Let me, however, hasten to explain my meaning, lest I be misunderstood; for though somewhat disappointed with the much-vaunted island, after rambling over its every corner, I became afterwards fully alive to its real charms, and am now one of its most devoted admirers; for that there is a grace and loveliness attached to Philæ pre-eminently of all Nile views cannot be denied; but then I think it must be sought for not at close quarters, but as with many another Nubian beauty, it will be found that distance will lend enchantment to the view. Now in my humble opinion it is not so much the several ruins, elegant though they too are; no, nor yet the views as seen from the island, which constitute its charm; but it is the *tout-ensemble* of the island itself, as seen from a little distance, lying so picturesquely and calmly in the very midst of the river, which is shut in here by perpendicular black granite rocks; it is the contrast of the fertile sunny island with the stern rugged iron-bound precipices which tower above it; and in connection with Philæ there always rises up in my mind, a picture

of perfect repose and of nature in its most smiling aspect. Then, as seen from a little distance, the ruins are grouped for most telling effect; the long and graceful corridors supported by pillars, the vast and massive propylons; and detached from all these, 'Pharaoh's bed,' with an elegance and lightness all its own, combine to lend an enchantment to the fairy island, and to dub it by universal consent the most lovely spot on the Nile. More especially were we struck with its beauty, when, anchored just above it, we sat on deck far into the night, gazing on the scene. It was one of those balmy warm evenings for which Upper Egypt and Nubia are so famous; a brilliant moon shining overhead lit up the river, the rocks, and the ruins; not a breath of wind to cause a ripple on the silver stream; not a sound to disturb our reverie, save the scarce audible hum of the distant cataract. Then I saw Philæ to perfection, and understood the enthusiastic admiration which I failed to entertain when examining the details of the island at close quarters, and under the garish light of day.

We had engaged a Nubian pilot to assist Mohammed in steering our dahabeah during the voyage to and from the second Cataracts, as the channel here is in many parts intricate and shift-

ing, and in some places dangerous from sunken rocks. He was a coal-black, chattering, lazy, timid, fellow, with whom we very soon came into violent collision, and who gave us trouble all through our Nubian expedition. His object, for his own private ends, was to spin out the journey as long as possible, and accordingly the second evening he spent on board, when a bright moon lit up the river, and a favouring breeze was driving us gently along, we heard an altercation on deck, and found him preparing to anchor for the night. We first tried gentle remonstrance, and pointed out that such delay on such a night was not to be thought of for a moment; but when he pleaded danger from rocks, and fear of accidents, and was about to persist in bringing our vessel to shore, we changed our tactics, and commanded him to proceed, assuring him that at the first intimation we had of a repetition of such behaviour, forthwith he would be ejected overboard into the Nile; a threat which had the desired effect, for, though grumbling and discontented, he did not dare to repeat the attempt. But as long as he was with us, he was ever seeking some excuse for a halt, by day as well as by night: there was not wind enough to carry us by sunken rocks where it was impossible to track, or there was too much

wind for safety, or there was a head wind, or a cross wind which would drive us back; or if we waited till evening, a favouring wind would spring up, and then as certainly it was too dark to make the attempt. However, we soon learnt to disregard his advice altogether, and to follow trusty Mohammed's opinion, though at the same time this Nubian (Reis Moosa was his title and name) did us infinite mischief, as his loud assertions of danger stirred up the easily-excited fears of our sailors, and encouraged them in a chronic state of discontent and murmuring.

We were now fairly in Nubia, and from the first moment of entering it we saw a marked change in the character of the country from that below the Cataracts. We had thought that the valley of the Nile in Egypt was narrow enough; the ranges of rocks which bound the desert on either bank being always visible from deck, and in many places coming down very near to the river. We had remarked many times how very circumscribed was the cultivable soil; for only so far as the Nile can fertilise by annual inundation or by artificial watering, is there the smallest prospect of a crop; there is no middle tract, no doubtful ground between the tilled and untilled land; for to the very

edge of the irrigated soil, the sands of the desert extend, and the line of separation seems cut, as it were, with a knife; up to that line, on the one side, you see the most rich, fertile, and luxuriant fields, on the other, the most barren unproductive sand. And the same principle holds good in Nubia, only that here the desert encroaches so much on the valley, and comes so near to the water's edge, that the productive land is infinitesimally small. In some districts there was absolutely nothing left, not a single foot on either bank, but the sands and rocks of the desert came down to the river brink; in a few favoured spots the breadth of irrigated land would spread out almost to the dimensions of a little plain; but in general a very narrow strip of land, often not twenty yards wide, often only the steep bank of the river, represented the whole width of the kingdom of Nubia, as cultivated in those parts. This little thin thread of cultivation on either side of the river very forcibly reminded me of similar patches of crops on the embankments of the Great Western Railway at home; but what sort of kingdom would that be thought, which is comprised within the narrow limits of the fences which mark the property of the Great Western Railway, though

that Company's lines were extended even to Penzance?

Then in Nubia the rocks often hem in the river within a deep narrow channel, confining the water within iron-bound walls of the hardest granite; from whence you may emerge to an open space, where vast sandbanks stretch their unprofitable areas over the centre of the stream, and thus defraud the inhabitants of many an acre of valuable land, spreading out the river to a mile or even more in width, and dividing its waters into many branches, several of which might fairly contend that they are the main bed of the Nile. Here is the true home of the crocodile, amidst these huge islands of sand, for here they feel secure from surprise, as they take care not to bask on any sandbank, unless it be wholly surrounded by water. In proportion to the breadth of cultivated soil on either bank of the river, is the frequency or the scarcity of villages; in some parts they are many miles apart, in others, they stand very close to one another, sometimes so thickly that they succeed each other every quarter of a mile. They are composed of mud hovels, without windows, only one story high, and are miserable habitations indeed. But they are quite of a piece with their

owners, whose general appearance and manners surprised me not a little, as I was not prepared for the very uncivilised, not to say semi-savage, look which the ordinary Nubian presents.

I have already said that the men are well-made and tall, and so far Nature has been kind to them; but I fear they do not attempt to improve their natural advantages. They certainly work the *sakias* with indefatigable industry, and these clumsy machines creak and groan with their peculiarly unpleasant and monotonous sound the livelong day; and they hoe the soil they can irrigate, and make the most of the land they possess; but to sleep in the sun is their delight—to sleep, and then smoke, and chatter, and sleep again, the seventh heaven of their most delightful dreams. For dress, the very scantiest shirt suffices, and a small skull-cap protects their head from the blazing sun, while for ornament and use a large knife is worn in a neat leathern case above the elbow of the left arm; and to see these half-naked niggers with their spears, and *koorbash* of hide, and ostrich eggs, and antelope's horns, and brass trinkets, wherewith they crowd round the boat, and offer their goods for sale, as we moor near a village, one might fancy we were near the sources of

the Nile rather than in Nubia, so much do they savour of veritable savage life. Still more barbarous to European eyes is the adornment of the Nubian females; a single blue garment composes all their dress, but their ornaments are many and remarkable; their hair is most elaborately prepared, being first matted, plaited, or twisted into innumerable curls of the very smallest dimensions, then plentifully plastered with castor oil, which possesses a most objectionable odour. When the hair is thus thoroughly saturated with castor oil, that villanous and greasy liquid attracts all the dust and dirt which comes in its way; moreover the end of every curl is finished off with a small lump of wet Nile mud, and this is thought to be a great adornment in the eyes of a Nubian beauty, who is content to rearrange her tresses after this elaborate manner, about once in three weeks or a month. Then her shoulders are always well besmeared with the filthy compound of oil and grease which trickles down from her saturated hair, and whatever degree of elegance this style of dress may have in the eyes of some (and that some may admire it, I will not question, for *de gustibus non est disputandum*), at all events I will avouch that it is by no means odoriferous; and we always took

care to get to windward, and to keep at a respectful distance, when we chanced to pass any of these fashionable belles. Hence the reason of my remark on Nubian beauties, when speaking of Philæ, that in their case, too, it is better to admire from afar.

In common with the women of Egypt, they tattoo their faces, arms, hands, and feet; darken their eyelids with kohl, and stain their fingers with henna; so that artificial colouring of the skin goes a long way towards a Nubian belle's toilet, as was the case with our British ancestors two thousand years ago. But if the actual dress of the Nubian woman is homely, the ornaments she wears are many and large; bracelets, armlets, anclets, necklaces, ear-rings, finger-rings, nose-rings may all be seen in profusion on one and the same person; they are made of horn and beads, of brass and silver, and even of gold, and some good ladies whose personal attractions are by no means prepossessing seemed quite loaded with the ornaments they crowd upon their faces, necks, legs, arms and fingers. Of ear-rings they cleverly contrive to wear two pairs at a time, having the upper edge of the ear as well as the lobe bored for the purpose, a device I seriously commend to the

consideration of English ladies, who still in this nineteenth century adhere to the really barbarous practice of boring their ears for the display of jewels. To the same adherents to the remains of ancient barbaric custom, let me humbly commend another ornament in general use in Upper Egypt and Nubia; to wit, the nose-ring. This is usually a thin ring of brass, upon which several beads are strung, and it is suspended from the right nostril, and falls over the right corner of the mouth; and to our unsophisticated eyes did not appear either a useful or becoming appendage; but then our judgment may be warped by European prejudice; for the nose-ring has descended from very early times, and is distinctly alluded to in Genesis;* where Abraham's servant Eleazar places the ring *on the face of* Rebecca, and the bracelets on her hands, and to this day these have continued to be the recognized gifts of betrothal amidst this unchanging people. When for any cause the nose-ring is removed for a time (and no ladies *always* wear their jewels) its place is supplied by a diminutive wooden peg, which has a strange and by no means pleasing appearance. The bracelets,

* Genesis xxiv. 47, see also Isaiah iii. 21, Ezekiel xvi. 12.

armlets, and anclets are usually of brass, but sometimes of silver, and of considerable weight, and several are worn on each wrist, arm, and ancle; the necklaces are often of coins and frequently of various kinds of beads and scarabæi; but finger-rings are worn in perhaps greater profusion than either of the above, so that it is by no means rare to see every finger on a woman's hands, the thumbs too not excluded, literally loaded with these ornaments. This passion for jewellery (to dignify the trinkets with a high-sounding title which by no means belongs to them) is shared by the poorest, the ugliest, and the dirtiest; and none are in so abject a state of poverty as to want the decorations in which all delight; to be sure they are of no great intrinsic value; those which we purchased as specimens generally ran to about a piastre, or twopence halfpenny, each; though some we saw, silver armlets and elaborate necklaces for example, for which they demanded two or three dollars. The dress of the unmarried girls in Nubia, that is to say, of little children, for they usually marry at the mature age of twelve, is slight and scanty in the extreme; for it consists of nothing more than a belt of very small strips of leather, or perhaps I should describe it as a narrow fringe of innumerable

leather thongs, some twelve or fourteen inches in length, suspended from a belt which is tied round the loins. The boys are invariably naked, and queer little urchins they look, with their shaven heads, one lock only being left, wherewith the angel is to pull them into paradise at the last day. Little children sit astride on their mother's shoulder when carried from place to place, seldom in their arms, as I have remarked is the practice in Egypt also.

We had so much head-wind in our journey through Nubia, both in the ascent and descent of the river (and I always took advantage of slow travelling to walk with my gun on the bank), that I think I must have passed by more villages, and seen more of the inhabitants, than falls to the lot of most tourists. On our entering Nubia I was cautioned by Braheem never to wander too far from the boat, as the natives were sometimes troublesome, but I never found them otherwise than civil and friendly; they would sometimes follow me in crowds, the women and children more especially, shrieking for backsheesh; but I had served such an apprenticeship in Egypt, that I was become quite hardened to this incessant demand; and on many occasions I penetrated for miles into the desert,

quite alone, but I always found those I chanced to meet gentle and polite, and on these occasions, when away from the river bank, the children, unused to the apparition of a white man, would scour away shrieking with affright, as soon as they recovered from the stare of unmixed astonishment with which my appearance invariably overwhelmed them.

It was while walking along the river bank amongst a grove of palm-trees, soon after we entered Nubia, that a lad brought me a chameleon, which he carried in his hand by means of a withe tied tightly to the poor animal's tail. I purchased the little creature for a very small amount of backsheesh, and succeeded in keeping him alive, not only when within the tropics, but even through the whole of our voyage; and when we reached Cairo, he was in excellent health, and became quite tame and fearless. It was with considerable reluctance that I parted with him there and made him over to our servant Vincenzo, but it was impossible to carry him on a riding tour through the Holy Land, or I would have tried to bring him to England. My chameleon attracted a great deal of attention on board other boats, for it was an understood thing on the Nile that it was very difficult to

reconcile these little animals to captivity, and that they always pined or were starved to death, or the first symptom of cold wind killed them; and Belzoni recounts how he procured thirty of these curious reptiles, which he ineffectually tried to tame, for they all died one by one, as was the fate of those which Warburton* attempted to bring home. My specimen however was neither so perverse, nor so injudicious. I placed him in a large box in which he could move about at ease; covered it with green gauze which had been used for entomological purposes, and then supplied him amply with flies, when he was too lazy to catch them for himself; and so he weathered the fit of sulkiness which he certainly exhibited at first, and became perfectly reconciled to captivity; and was so gradually acclimatised that the much colder weather we experienced in Lower Egypt had no effect upon him at all. The form of the chameleon is exceedingly strange; nay, its appearance is absolutely ludicrous. The body, though deep, is extremely narrow, and the back terminates in a knife-like ridge, which runs from the neck to the tail; the head is large, the mouth very wide, the tail long and prehensile;

* Crescent and the Cross, p. 168.

but the chief peculiarities are the eyes, the tongue, and the feet. The eyes are large, quite independent of one another, and at once suggest the idea of telescopes, so prominently do they stand out from the head, as on stalks; they are covered with a moveable film, and in this is a small aperture, giving the idea of a lens. The tongue is of immense length, and armed with a thick fleshy heart-shaped bulbous tip, which is furnished with a viscid secretion, adapted for retaining the fly or other insect on which the long tongue has been darted from a considerable distance with excessive rapidity. The foot I can describe in no other way than by comparing it to the foot of the parrot, or to the palms of two outstretched hands placed at right angles to one another; and with this double-handed member the little reptile can grasp the small branch on which it walks with great firmness. Its general colour was light green, resembling that of the tree frogs so common in Italy, and, as in the case of those beautiful little creatures, the exact hue of the leaves on which it is found; but it often assumed a yellowish tint, and dark spots would occasionally appear and as quickly disappear over its thin body. At other times, more especially if frightened or angered, it

would suddenly become a dull brown, and then it would open its wide mouth and hiss in a menacing way; its movements were usually most deliberate, as it moved about on the cushions of the divan in the saloon, lifting one foot at a time with the utmost solemnity, and often holding it suspended in the air as if it had forgotten its purpose: then, when in a good humour and disposed to hunt flies, of which there was always an abundance in the cabin, it slowly and cautiously crept within distance, and with a quick dart of the tongue which was often difficult for the eye to follow, seized its victim and landed it in the capacious mouth, and at once marched on in search of another. It was remarkable that the flies never seemed to notice the stealthy approach of their deadly foe, to which no doubt its very leisurely movements contributed not a little. Then it would bask in the sun in the windows of the saloon, or take up its position on a palm branch used for cleaning guns which hung vertically from the wall, and which became a very favourite haunt, or sometimes it would travel over the floor, and out on the deck, if not carefully watched. Several times I lost it for a day or two, when it had absconded, while my back was turned, and it was generally found in the most unlikely

places—in the pantry, or under a bed, or amongst the guns. It was always very impatient of being put back into its box, and showed fight with its threatening mouth, as often as I seized it by the back to transfer it to its own quarters; then it would hiss, and even take my finger in the feeble grasp of its weak jaws; and at last became so knowing that it would scuttle away at a great pace when it saw me preparing to take it up; wherein it disproved most undeniably the common report that the chameleon cannot run or walk, but only crawl with the very slowest motion. Occasionally it would puff itself out in a singular manner, its thin transparent body being at such times made to assume aldermanic proportions, and in a few moments it would resume its usual shape and size. When I took leave of it at Cairo, which I did with great regret, it was in excellent health and spirits, and more lively than I imagined that sluggish reptile could be; and it would devour twenty flies every day, either caught by itself, or supplied by me when it was too lazy to hunt.

Several times during our voyage between the cataracts, I made excursions into the desert, which has peculiar attractions of its own, but did not repay me in an ornithological point of view; for I

seldom saw living creature from the time I left the Nile valley till I returned to it again. Occasionally a grey hare would start up among the stones, and hurry away over the sand. Now and then I had a shot at a jackal among the prickly scrub, and once I rolled one over with a green cartridge, but he crept away among the impervious thorny gorse with which the ground was covered, and it was impossible to follow or search for him.

On these desert expeditions I saw several admirable samples of the mirage. As I walked on, with my back to the Nile valley, a large lake appeared to be stretched right in front, and out of it islands seemed to stand with marvellous distinctness, with stones and grass reflected at the shallow water's edge. I knew at once that it was the mirage on which I was gazing, for no expanse of water could by possibility be there; and yet so perfect was the illusion, that I would on more than one occasion walk on towards the apparent margin of the lake, keeping my eyes steadily fixed on some particular spot; but only to find the interminable burning sand when I reached the place I had marked; and to see the sheet of water receded a hundred yards farther on. So perfect is this delusive appearance, that even when satisfied that it was the mirage, and

nothing real, it was often difficult to believe that the eye could be so deceived; and we could well understand the despair of the thirsty traveller as, Tantalus-like, he saw the coveted waters receding from his parched lips; a spectre so provoking, so delusive, so disappointing, as to have justly merited the appellation given to it by the Arabs of '*Bahr Shaitan*,' 'devil's water.'

Another marvel peculiar to the desert, mentioned by many an Oriental writer, is the supposed sound of church bells, which in the wildest solitudes vibrate on the astonished traveller's ear. On one occasion, when alone in the desert, far from habitations, I distinctly heard what I concluded to be this strange and to me inexplicable bell-ringing; and as I stopped to listen more attentively, it was evidently not the effect of imagination: there were the bells louder than before, and I could fancy they assumed the tone of my own peal at Yatesbury. I had halted many times to listen, not without a certain undefined sensation of awe, and was nearing the edge of the cultivated land, having satisfied myself that the sound came from one particular direction alone; and I was speculating on the possible cause of it; when, somewhat I own to my discomfiture, I discovered that the tinkling proceeded

from the barrels of my gun which I had been carrying over my shoulder, and in which, when held in a particular direction, the wind created a ringing sound; which, even when its origin became thus rudely known to me, still had a marvellous resemblance to distant church bells. It is strange, that, hold my gun as I would on many after occasions, I never again succeeded in creating the same vibratory noise; and, but for the accidental discovery of its cause, after a long period of deception, I should have gone away thoroughly convinced that I had heard this often-asserted phenomenon of desert travel. Not that I for a moment mean to doubt the fact avouched by so many travellers, of the occasional sound of bells in the intensely dry air of those scorching solitudes: the phenomenon has been repeatedly asserted by many a credible witness, whose word cannot be doubted; and has been more or less satisfactorily explained by many a scientific philosopher: I only record my disappointment, in discovering that the bells to which for a long time I listened with intense astonishment and delight, not unmixed with awe, were to be accounted for in the most prosaic manner; and my pleasant day-dream, indulged in for a moment with most implicit faith, was on a sudden cruelly dispelled.

And so we passed through Nubia to the Second Cataracts, where the rocks again throw a barrier across the river; and that is the real *Ultima Thule* to which modern Nile travellers usually attain. We had experienced a great deal of very hot weather, in which I revelled with extreme satisfaction, but which completely prostrated the little strength of poor H., and made him so weak and ill, as to alarm us seriously on his account. Belzoni declares that from the first to the second cataract is the driest and hottest spot on the earth, inasmuch as no rain ever falls there, and it is under the tropic of Cancer. I know not whether this be so, but that the heat was something intense, I, who passed a considerable portion of every day in walking over the burning sands of the desert, am enabled to aver; and our registering thermometer would often mark 95° in the shade, even in the saloon, where we exhausted every means of ventilation, and excluded the sun from it to keep it as cool as was possible.

We sailed at rare intervals with a fresh breeze, sometimes through really fine rocks which rise perpendicularly from the water and hem in the Nile within a narrow channel; but for by far the greater part of this portion of our journey our sailors had laboriously tracked our boat against the rapid

stream. We have been for some time fairly within the tropics: we are in a latitude considerably south of Calcutta: for many weeks we have been in full view of the great constellation of Equatorial Africa, after which we had named our boat, but which, though certainly bright and beautiful, does not, in my honest opinion, surpass in brilliancy and beauty some of its brethren of northern skies. And now we reached the village of Wady Halfeh, so-called from the *halfeh*—grass, or coarse stiff dry herbage—which springs up wherever the waters of irrigation cease. This is the extreme limit to which our dahabeah was to go, and as we anchored near the eastern bank on the fifteenth of February, it was with a feeling of thankfulness and satisfaction that we found ourselves at the farthest point of our journey, and that we had penetrated up the great mysterious river, more than a thousand miles from the sea, and were nearing the confines of the 'blameless' Ethiopians, those favourites of the gods, whom the whole conclave of Olympus delighted to honour.*

* Homer: *Il.* i. 423; *Od.* i. 22.

CHAPTER III.

WADY HALFEH TO PHILÆ.

As Wady Halfeh was the most southern village we reached, so had it a more completely Oriental aspect than perhaps any other we had seen; the huts of the inhabitants are scattered at intervals, now in clusters, now singly, beneath the deep shadow of quite a forest of magnificent palm-trees; most of these huts were enclosed within mud walls, and they stand at the distance of some hundreds of yards from the water's edge, at least when the Nile is as low as it is at this time of year. But on either bank of the river there is an emporium on a large scale; tents are pitched on the sand; piles of bales and boxes and bags of merchandise are ranged in a ring or square; and in the midst, among camel furniture, saddles, rugs, and cooking utensils, the owners and their families and followers sedately squat; long guns and rifles, spears, swords, and huge pistols are

piled in the centre, or carefully laid ready for use in every such company, and form an important part of the necesssary implements with which all are provided. Then, on the outside, lie the camels, resting on the sand, and donkeys are picketed, and big savage dogs with threatening eyes are the sentinels keeping guard over the whole; fires for cooking blaze in every such encampment as evening draws on; and the men, who are as black as ebony, come forward as we ride by, and offer assegais and spears for sale. While at anchor near, we saw the arrival and departure of more than one caravan; which consisted of long strings of camels, following one another, laden with bales of merchandise, with which they stalked away into the trackless desert, to or from some distant spot.

Wady Halfeh lies some miles to the north of the second cataract; so that we had to cross the river in our *sandal*, and ride a weary journey of several hours through the deepest sand to reach the mountain of Abooseir, which overhangs the rapids, and offers an admirable panoramic view. Our donkeys were of the most diminutive size, and very weak in the legs, and wholly guiltless of saddle and bridle. Now I had long since learnt to

dispense with a bridle as a useless incumbrance, and it was much more convenient to have both hands free for holding my gun; and a touch of the barrel on either side of the neck of the docile beast was quite enough to guide him in the direction I wished to go; and I soon learned the Arabic ejaculations intended to quicken or slacken the speed, or to call a halt. But the absence of saddle on a ride of ten miles on a half-starved, raw-boned Nubian donkey, is an evil which time does not lessen, but which, on the contrary, makes itself felt more and more; so that after a by no means easy ride, wherein our donkeys laboured through the heavy sand, we were not sorry to dismount under the shade of a friendly rock, and throw ourselves on the ground for a little repose, before we climbed the mountain of Abooseir, for this was one of the hottest days we had ever known, and the tropical sun was pouring his fiercest beams upon our heads, and the red sand of the desert reflected such burning rays on our eyes, that protected though they were with blue spectacles, with which we had provided ourselves for this express purpose, we were quite dazzled when we reached the end of our ride. Then we climbed the overhanging cliff of Abooseir, and just

below us saw the river divided into many channels by the blackest of rocks; these boulders so block the course of the Nile, and turn it into so many streams, that I should calculate the total breadth of the river's bed here to be nothing short of a mile; and they extend up the stream for a long distance. Here then the navigation of the Nile is altogether interrupted, and it is necessary for those who travel farther south to make the journey on camels, until the long reach of rocks and boulders is passed; for from this point the bed of the river is for near a hundred miles a succession of sunken rocks, and, in the expressive language of the Arabs is called 'the belly of stone.' But there is nothing grand and fine about these rocks as in the first cataracts, they are simply a quantity of large stones impeding the course of the stream, and their only qualification in a picturesque point of view is the contrast in colour, which their exceedingly black appearance presents to the rushing foaming water, which, not without a struggle, a splash, and a roar, finds its way through some complicated channel, to the smoother water below.

But if the second cataract is not in itself highly attractive, the view southwards from Abooseir is

full of interest. We had now reached the extreme limit of our journey towards the south, and from the moment when we turned our backs on Abooseir the homeward journey was to begin. This was a pleasant thought to expatriated wanderers, condemned by the autocratic commands of severe doctors to six months' transportation in southern climes, and sternly forbidden to set foot in Europe till the prescribed period of exile was expired. It was pleasant to us all to think of going homewards, separated as we had been now for several months from families and homes; and yet, paradoxical though it may seem, it was with an earnest longing gaze that from the rocky eminence whereon we sat, just over the second cataract, we cast our eyes southwards, over the interminable hills and plains of barren rocks and sand which stretched out due south, and east, and west, for many miles, while the Nile, like a silver ribbon edged with green, might be seen winding down towards us from the very farthest horizon southwards. Long did we sit upon that lofty rock, and many were the wistful glances we cast into the far desert of the south, of which from our elevated position we had an excellent view, and we tried to penetrate, with the help of our glasses, the

extreme points within sight, and then in thought overleaped that vast barrier of sand which intervened, and were, in imagination, following up the great river to its sources, and joining in the glorious researches of Speke, Grant, and Baker. We did not, I am glad to think, carve our names on the rock of Abooseir, though that is the practice of Europeans generally, and the mountain top is scored with many English names; but to my mind that is one of the most senseless habits in which the traveller is wont to indulge. At Abooseir, indeed, it is a harmless freak, but when carried out, as it is by some, in the temples and tombs, even on the faces of solemn Osiride statues, and across the sculpture and hieroglyphics so interesting to all, the practice becomes something more than ridiculous folly: it is a mark of selfish egotism and destructive Vandalism combined; and I am happy to remember, that since I carved my name in a legitimate way in the Upper School at Eton, I have never disgraced myself by this childish pastime. Moreover there is something in my opinion exquisitely snobbish in such a vain record of the ordinary traveller's presence on the scene, and is only surpassed by the kindred practice in Switzerland of scoring on the alpenstock

the name of the pass or mountain accomplished by the tourist, who not unfrequently rides over the pass, while the guide carries the inevitable iron-shod staff, and whom I have seen on the edge of the glacier above Chamouni, supported by two guides, with the alpenstock, duly branded 'Mer de glace,' carried before him by a third.

And now we have roused ourselves from our reverie on Abooseir; taken a last look at the south; bidden adieu to the Cataracts, and begun the first steps of the homeward journey; and, discarding the donkey, of which I had experienced more than enough, I prepared to shoot my way back to Wady Halfeh, plodding leisurely through the sand on the river's bank. Scarcely had I begun my solitary wandering, when on coming to the water's edge, and peering with my glass in all directions, I distinctly saw a large hyæna lying on the sand, but with head lifted up, evidently listening intently and on the alert for a foe; a very slight movement on my part sufficed to make him spring up and hurry away behind the rocks, where I lost sight of him altogether. He appeared to my unpractised eyes of very large size, though I was too far off to judge very accurately. Hyænas are very abundant in these parts, but too wary to be readily destroyed;

there was however the skin of one on board a Frenchman's boat, with which we fell in a few days later, and this had fallen a prey to the gun of one of the party on board.

Our guide in the morning had pointed out in the sand the tracks of a large herd of gazelles, where they had come down to the water to drink, and offered to conduct us at night where we could lie in wait for a shot. Subsequently we came upon several such tracks of this beautiful little antelope; but not once through all my desert wanderings in Nubia did I chance to get a glimpse of a single individual of this genus; and not till long after, when travelling in Syria, and riding down to the shores of the Dead Sea, did I come upon the gazelle, abundant though they are in these parts of Africa.

My walk back to the boat at Wady Halfeh, fatiguing though it was in the extreme to plod through the deep sand under the scorching sun, was the most successful I had experienced in regard to the number of rare birds which I obtained; in this one ramble on the river bank, I shot no less than ten specimens, belonging to five species, not one of which I had previously encoun-

tered; but which will be more fully enumerated farther on.

When I reached the dababeah, I found that our floating home had undergone such a strange metamorphosis in our absence, that I could hardly recognise the well-known boat. There is to be no more tracking or poling; sailing and rowing are the only recognised modes of progression on the downward journey, unless I mention floating with the stream, a lazy tedious method of advance, highly in favour with the Arabs, and upon which we had many an altercation with our crew. So the poles are stacked away near the mast; the tow rope is coiled up and laid aside; the long yard is taken down and lashed longitudinally over the boat, above the main-deck and quarter-deck, six feet over our heads; the great sail is rolled up and stowed away, the small sail is removed from the stern and attached to the mast, ready for occasional use; the oars are taken out and put in place; every alternate plank on deck is taken up to make room for the eight rowers to work in the hold; the filterer, which hitherto held the proud position of the centre of the deck, is ignominiously banished to an obscure corner near the mast; and though these preparations beto-

kened work, I own they did not conduce to our trim appearance, but had robbed the 'Southern Cross' of all the elegance and symmetry she possessed. Neither had our crew been idle on their own account. We had in the morning, in accordance with recognized custom, given them backsheesh at this the farthest point in our journey, which though not much in amount, rejoiced their hearts, and created quite an ovation among them. This money had been carefully and scrupulously divided between them; a double portion to the two reis, and a single portion to the eight sailors; then, like careful merchants as they were, they all purchased the splendid dates of Nubia, and stowed away their cargo, wherewith they should trade, when we returned to more northern latitudes. They were in high spirits when I came on board, about sunset, and as all was ready, no sooner did I appear, for I was the last on shore, than we immediately pushed off into the stream and began to float down. A very gentle north wind was blowing, but we could hardly conceive that with scarcely a ripple on the water, our hardy mariners were unwilling to row against the wind. We did not then know, though we soon learnt by painful experience, and the lesson was thoroughly impressed upon our

minds by many a tedious delay, that unless a perfect calm prevails it is not the custom for the Arabs to row; and to suggest to the Arab mind that it is expedient to do anything not authorised by precedent, is a most audacious violation of all rule, and an infringement on the prerogatives of the nation, which sticks closely to universal habit, and cannot by any means, however plausible, be induced to deviate from general practice.

So we floated down, broadside to the stream, as fast as the current in mid-river could take us, on a glorious night, while the sailors brought out the tambourine and darabooka, and the dullest of music alternated with their monotonous songs and the everlasting chorus which invariably rang in our ears from morning to night.

At length the wind entirely died away, and there was no semblance of a pretext for farther idleness, and our contract specified that on the downward journey we were to advance continuously, four men rowing by night, and six by day; so the sailors, not without evident chagrin, had to take to the oars. They sat two abreast on the deck, each man resting his feet on an inclined plank which had been taken up from the flooring, and one end of which rested at the bottom of the hold, while the

other reached to the deck. These planks are placed at an inclination of about thirty degrees; then each man walks up his plank to the extreme end, reaches back his long heavy oar as far as possible; pulls it with considerable force as he retreats backwards down the plank, as he regains his seat, and as he stretches back as far as he can reach, and finally pulls it out with a jerk. This would not be effected without much labour, if the men really exerted themselves as they could, and as they occasionally did; but like true niggers, there was generally much more pretence at work than reality, and with all this seeming diligence the oars sometimes scarcely touched the water, though the men walked up and down their planks, fell over on their seats, and made a show of desperate toil with most exemplary perseverance; while every man joined in the everlasting chorus, their heads rolled on their shoulders in time, their eyes sparkled with fun, and they often broke into a loud laugh in the midst of apparently their most strenuous exertions. All night more particularly, and for the few first days of the 'coming down,' they were exceedingly merry; music and song enlivened the boat by day and by night; indeed, the noise was sometimes overpowering, and on a dark evening it

was strange to watch their black faces, set off by their white robes, and white turbans wound round the tarboosh, as with grinning teeth they roared out the chorus of their songs, invoking the help of Allah and Mohammed in a strain that savoured little enough of reverence or devotion. Sometimes one more boisterous than the rest would volunteer a dance, and this consisted in moving about on one leg on a plank, with anything but graceful evolutions, the other leg stretched out behind, just as I have seen the Ethiopian serenaders in London accomplish the same ridiculous step.

And so we danced and sung, rowed and floated as we began our homeward voyage. When in floating, as it was quite impossible for the steersman to keep the boat broadside to the current, and so we would turn round, now stem on now stern, the sailors adopted a most ill-advised, but I presume customary, method, which wasted a great deal of time as well as of unnecessary labour, in putting out the oars on one side, and pulling her round till we were back in the stream, the result of which was that after making sundry revolutions, we found ourselves but little advanced, if not actually retarded; whereas a couple of oars on both sides would have put us straight at once

without losing way, but remonstrance and argument were alike useless, and 'the custom of the river' was maintained to the very end of the voyage. I may add, with regard to the navigation of the Nile, that, as a general rule, the Arabs adopted a plan the very opposite to what an English boatman would have employed, so that in our eyes they always seemed to go the wrong way to work with the sail, to seize the wrong rope, to pull the wrong oar, and to use the worst means of extricating us from a sandbank. But we soon found that any suggestion to try another course was invariably met with the reply that such was not their habit, an unanswerable argument, after which there was nothing more to be said; so we continued to look on with wonder at their clumsy proceedings, not always unmixed with indignation at their obstinacy and perverseness.

The great temple of Aboo-Simbel, otherwise called Ipsamboul, was our first halt, and is decidedly the greatest attraction in antiquities which Nubia has to offer. It differs from any we had hitherto explored in being hewn in the solid rock, and is especially imposing from the four gigantic figures of Rameses II. which adorn its exterior. The faces of these well-proportioned colossi have a

remarkable expression of placidity and repose, and the features peculiar to the inhabitants of this country are admirably preserved. A vast quantity of the finest, purest, and driest reddish-yellow sand has gradually been blown over the cliff from the desert, until the temple has been nearly choked with it, and the colossal figures on the exterior buried up to the neck. This sand is so exquisitely fine and pure that, notwithstanding the warm tint with which it glows, it has no other appearance than that of snow, drifted over the precipice above, or fallen in an avalanche down the rifted sides of the rock. It has come from the interminable African desert, and the heap is increased with every west wind; so that the entrance laid open by the indefatigable labours of Belzoni and his companions bids fair to be very soon blocked up again by the ever-increasing drift.

Whether seen under the full glare of the blazing sun or in moonlight, this sand glitters and sparkles beneath your feet, and reminds you forcibly of the snow-fields you traverse in the higher Alps. We climbed up the mountain of sand before sunrise, in order to see the first beams of early dawn shine into the doorway, and throw a partial light into the interior, which is not repeated at a later

period of the day; but it was not till the sun had been some time risen that its rays penetrated within that half-choked orifice, through which we had to crawl on hands and knees over the soft sand. Then when our eyes had been accustomed to the gloom, a single streak of bright sunshine lit up the great Osiride figures, four of which on either side flank the large hall of the temple; beyond was a small pronaos, then a corridor and lastly a shrine, in the midst of which stands the original altar of solid stone, while at the extreme end are four seated figures, the founder Rameses the Great being here associated with the triad of divinities especially reverenced in these parts. There are other long narrow chambers on either side of these central portions of the temple, all of which are covered with sculpture and hieroglyphics, and which we carefully examined with candles at a later period of the day. In one small chamber I found a single figure surrounded with hieroglyphics, marked out with a broad bold line of black paint, which was evidently the first step in executing these decorations adopted by the artist, and which the workmen who followed with the chisel had left untouched; hard by were other hieroglyphics whose outlines were only rudely chiselled

out, and where the rough edges still bore traces of the dark outline drawn by the designer; these betokened another step nearer completion; and then again, following these, were the finished designs, men and animals, beasts and birds, and the many conventional figures so often seen in the hieroglyphics of this country, smoothly cut in the rock, the well-defined edges as sharp as if just completed. This was extremely interesting, for it revealed at a glance the whole process of the work, and shows how the workmen left it unfinished above three thousand years ago.

There is a smaller temple at Aboo-Simbel, likewise excavated in the living rock, consisting of a hall with side chambers, a pronaos and a shrine containing one mutilated figure; but the execution is very inferior to that of its larger companion above. In both temples a candle is absolutely necessary to enable the visitor to grope his way through the chambers, and with difficulty suffices to point out dimly, and little by little, the elaborate sculptures and paintings which decorate the walls. How then, I ask again, these adornments which were executed at the cost of so much labour and skill, were seen by those who frequented the temple in its palmy days, is another of the many

problems connected with Egyptian antiquities which still puzzle those who who are most versed in these relics of a very early age. I can only say that I found it extremely difficult by the light of a candle to follow up the connected series of figures in these gloomy chambers; still more awkward was it to copy these outlines on paper, and draw some of the more interesting figures; while one hand is inevitably occupied in holding the wax taper, without which total darkness would have reigned supreme.

These gloomy chambers in temples and tombs are much infested with bats, which in some cases abound to a very unpleasant extent; and all who have groped through the long passages with the aid of a single candle, know how disagreeable is the feeling when some of these unclean creatures dash against your face, and extinguish your light. But even here use is second nature, and an enterprising American who had become accustomed to work in the mummy pits and tombs, records that when he horrified his companions by emerging into daylight with seven bats clinging to his beard, and a fringe which, Medusa-like, surrounded his head, he himself felt wholly unconscious of annoyance or disgust, so habituated had he become to their presence.

From Aboo-Simbel we rowed down by Ibreem, famous for its dates, which have the reputation of being the best in the world: there is some grand river scenery here, as the rocks come down to the water's edge, and are bold and sharp. Here too is a castle, built by the Romans, from whence they could overawe the Ethiopians, who seem to have been troublesome to their conquerors.

The next point of interest was Derr, the capital of Nubia. Hitherto we had seen nothing but the very rudest villages, and the habitations of the people had been mud hovels of the lowest type; but the capital of a large country suggested some pretentious buildings. We did not indeed expect to find amongst the half-savage Nubians any great architectural skill; but as we walked up to this city from the river-bank amidst vast groves of palms, amounting almost to a forest, we were surprised to find in its straggling streets only the same untidy mud hovels, thatched with reeds or palm-leaves, which prevailed in the smaller hamlets. The inhabitants too were equally barbarous in dress, or rather undress, and general appearance; the women and children ran shrieking within their dwellings at our approach, nor could we persuade any of them to come out, and sell us

some of the ornaments with which they were literally loaded. In like manner we failed to purchase specimens of the koorbash, which we had calculated on procuring here; so after a brief visit to the miserable and most uninteresting rock-hewn temple, we returned to our boat, followed at a respectful distance by a crowd of boys screaming 'backsheesh, ya Hawager,' as loudly as they could, but scampering off in manifest terror if we chanced to stop or turn round.

As we went on board, the whole youthful population of this unique capital crowded the bank, and then amidst reiterated yells for backsheesh we rowed down to the unprepossessing little temple of Amada, which, half buried in sand, lies out on the plain of the desert. But though exteriorly unattractive, this turned out to be a little gem inside; it is in utter ruin; a few rude columns supporting a massive roof are all that remain of the principal hall; and it is of most diminutive size, the shrine measuring but ten feet square; and the side chambers, some, five feet square, and some, five by ten. But when we had worked ourselves on hands and knees or perhaps in a more serpentine fashion, along the sand through the narrow openings, we were rewarded with hieroglyphics and sculpture

more beautifully executed, and paintings more vivid and fresh, and drawings and designs more spirited and life-like than any we had seen; and I have now a very lively impression of the beauties of Amada, which is not diminished by subsequent acquaintance with a vast number of more pretentious temples and tombs.

On that night, when in the great bend which the river makes from Derr to Korusco, we ran upon a rock close to shore in the dark. I think our Nubian pilot was not a little pleased at this mishap, for it certainly had the effect of bringing us to anchor till the moon rose. The temples now succeed one another in considerable numbers; many of them are extremely picturesque, but most of them are almost wholly destroyed, and few contain details worthy of attentive examination.

Sabooa was the first on the list, and we were wandering about it at daybreak, climbing up the steep hill, and ploughing through the deep intervening sand, but we were rewarded with nothing but a rough massive pylon, and four broken sphinxes supported by small figures on either side which alone remained of the avenue which once led to it. Next we visited the picturesque little temple of Maharraka, of which two rows of

columns alone remain entire. All the rest has fallen or is now falling to decay; but apparently it was never completed, and many of the stones which compose it, are still rough and unfinished.

While in this part of the river, violent winds from the north kept us moored to the bank, and if we did try to drift down the stream, our advance was scarcely perceptible; for of course the sailors objected to any unorthodox use of the oar in a breeze. Then we took the two best of our crew and rowed in the sandal down to the temple of Dakkeh, which is in better preservation than any other in these parts. The pylons are perfect, and there are the usual hypæthral court, the portico and the corridor leading to the sanctuary; in this is a massive though broken block of red granite which was undoubtedly the original shrine. The whole temple is enclosed in an encircling wall, as at the very perfect temple of Edfoo; and the sculpture and hieroglyphics are extremely good and in admirable condition. Here the female portion of the inhabitants was not afraid to approach us with their rings and bracelets and other ornaments for sale, but the prices they asked were so ridiculously exorbitant, and they were so redolent of the filthy castor oil with which they were plentifully be-

daubed, that we very soon declined any dealings with them, and betook ourselves to our boat.

The strong head-wind continued at intervals, so that for days we made but little progress, and much of our time was spent snugly moored under a bank. These were famous opportunities for my shooting expeditions, and I explored the banks in this part of the river very thoroughly; passing by many a mud village, where all came out to stare at the white man, and the more venturesome to ask for backsheesh. The weather is now so exceedingly hot, that we are glad to clothe ourselves in the lightest costume; while the regular native dress is a white skull cap and loin cloth, which show off the black shining skins of the wearers to advantage.

The temple of Gerf Hossayn did not detain us long; and next morning before daybreak we anchored off Dendour, reaching the temple before sunrise; when, in the grey light of early morning, it looked large, heavy, sombre and severe. Pylons are not beautiful, though they may give an idea of solidity and strength; then the massive stones which compose the walls of the court, the corridor and adytum overpower and weigh one down with their bulk and bigness, and the roof stones which span

from curtain wall to column oppress one with their exceeding thickness and size.

That same day we reached Kalabshe, where we were amazed to see the shore lined with a multitude of as veritable savages as one could find in any part of the continent of Africa; men and boys, many of them without a vestige of clothing, and others with the smallest apology for dress, armed with guns and long spears, and all gesticulating with out-stretched arms, and screeching at us with shrill voices, seemed prepared to dispute our landing. This was something more violent than we had expected; though every traveller, from the days of Belzoni down to the present time, speaks of the insolent and savage demeanour of these rude barbarians, and not a few have in consequence thought it more prudent to continue the voyage than to encounter such uncivilised ruffians. However as we swung round to our anchor, we discovered that all this noise of brandishing of weapons was but another form of demanding 'backsheesh,' while they offered their spears, antelopes' horns, and ornaments for barter, and demanded 'bereut,' or powder, in exchange; thrusting forwards their long guns as a tangible proof that if we complied with their requests our libera-

lity would not be thrown away. As we went ashore, the hubbub from so many voices increased, while every man tried to attract our attention exclusively to himself; and then, accompanied by some dozens of these naked niggers, still screaming for backsheesh at every step, aided by a crowd of women in the most scanty costume, offering their trinkets at twenty times their value, we passed on to the two famous temples, both of which are deserving of close attention. The greater of the two is superior in size to any other temple in Nubia, and would bear comparison with some of the largest and best in Egypt; indeed, when perfect, it must have been a magnificent pile of buildings. Now, with the exception of the pylons, it is a mass of ruins, choked with fallen roofs, columns, and walls. Still, if the traveller clambers over these obstructions, and perseveres in climbing into the chambers, he will find paintings of the very highest finish, and colours more wonderfully vivid than any he has seen elsewhere. Their preservation is to be attributed to a coat of plaster, or rather Nile mud, with which they have for centuries been covered: for the early Christians in Africa, like more modern Puritans in England, while hiding from sight wall-paintings

of which they disapproved, have been the unintentional means of preserving to our day much that is of great interest; a thin plaster in one case, whitewash in the other, being the material which has served at once as a veil and as a preservative. Unfortunately this was not the only method pursued by the Copts for hiding paintings and sculpture which were obnoxious to them: frequently they took the more effectual means of hacking the representations and scoring the painted walls, till the figures, or at all events their heads, were obliterated, and the heathen pictures permanently destroyed; here, however, the more gentle process had been employed, to the great gain of the modern traveller. The smaller temple at Kalabshe is called 'Bayt el Wellee,' or, 'the House of the Saint,' and also contains much excellent sculpture and admirable painting. On each side of the hall of entrance is a triad seated in a recess; it is, however, on the outside approach to this hall that I found the objects which interested me most, consisting of representations of various animals from the interior of Africa, conducted by Ethiopians of true negro type of face. I copied the greater part of these figures, the more prominent of which are the giraffe, bull,

lion, gazelle, monkey, and ostrich; and no artist of the present day (not even Landseer or Wolff) could depict more graphically in outline the true proportions and characteristics of these several creatures than those drawn on the wall by some talented draughtsman thirty-two centuries since.

From Kalabshe we passed through a very beautiful reach of the river, where the rocks again contract the stream in a narrow channel, and form another *bab*, or gate, which is the appellation given to every such passage; and then we came to Gertasse, which boasts a temple and a quarry, albeit of the former a few columns alone remain. Then floating a good deal, paddling much, and pulling a very little, we reached the neighbourhood of Dabod, where a tremendous hurricane from the north drove us under the high bank for shelter, and kept us prisoners here or in the neighbourhood for the greater part of three days. There was no mistake about this wind, and it was no paltry excuse on the part of the sailors that we were unable to stir; so we made all snug on board, and I went out shooting on shore. Crossing the first range of hills into the Libyan desert, I was soon out of sight of the Nile valley, and here I first came upon sand-slopes

at a considerable inclination, composed of the very finest, softest sand, into which the foot sank at every step, and which forcibly reminded me of walking on snow: nay, as I ran down some of these slopes at a steep pitch, I thought of the famous snow slopes of Norway, only here it would be impossible to shoot down with both feet together, as the natives do there, inasmuch as the sand is too heavy to be thus ploughed through in the descent. Coming back by the temple of Dabod, and busily engaged in copying some of the animals and birds depicted on the wall within the shrine, I was much surprised to hear English voices, which I found to belong to Mr. Chambers and Dr. Nankivill, of the 'Bruin,' who were encamped at Philæ, and were waiting to descend the cataract on board our boat. They had come up with a sail in the little Maltese duck-boat, which Mr. Chambers had purchased and used for shooting purposes, but they had hard work to row back: that tiny cockle-shell was never meant for rough weather, and was even now, with their united weight, almost level with the waves; so that it was not without considerable anxiety, and many grave shakes of the head from old Reis Mohammed, that we saw them cast off from our dahabeah, and battle with

the wind and stream in crossing the river. Then they had ten miles against the furious wind, before they could reach their tents at Philæ; and it was at last by dint of most violent exertion, one rowing while the other walked on shore, in turn, that late in the evening they reached their encampment in safety. But even then they were not altogether protected from the tempest, for rising even higher than before, the wind in the night blew down the tents, and covered the unfortunate occupants with sand.

We were so long stationary under the bank, or floating half a mile at a stretch within the day, that Braheem was obliged to start off on foot to Assouan for provisions, and it was not till the hurricane had blown itself out, that we floated down some days afterwards to Philæ, which we found in a calm as profound as that wherein we had left it reposing just three weeks before.

CHAPTER IV.

DOWN THE CATARACTS.

THE bold granite rocks were hemming in the river within impassable barriers, as if to forbid any jibbing, and compel it to make the plunge at the Great Cataracts, as we floated down past the islands of Philæ and Biggeh, in the early morning, prepared to shoot the great rapids, and hoping to reach Assouan by midday.

It was a glorious morning, after the recent hurricanes, and all nature seemed gay and smiling, as befits it in the near neighbourhood of Philæ; the sun shone as it had ever done in Nubia with intense heat; the thermometer in the shade of the saloon had been ranging from 85° to 95° during the last fortnight, sometimes retaining the latter high figure some hours after sunset, when a thorough draught blew through the opened windows, skylight, and doors.

The great fast of Ramadan was now drawing to

a close: indeed this was the last of the thirty days of severe abstinence which that month rigidly enforces on the devout Muslim. We had had ample evidence of the scrupulous exactness with which it had been kept by the majority of our own sailors, only four out of the ten having failed to observe it strictly. From the earliest dawn of day, till sunset, they never tasted water, food, or tobacco; and this rigorous rule they carefully followed throughout the entire month. However hot the sun above their heads might have been, however severe their labour under his burning rays, however parched their lips with intense thirst, however faint and spent they might have been in tracking, or rowing, or poling; nay, even when harnessed to the ropes they were actually wading through an arm of the river, they might not dip their hand into the stream and cool their burning throats with a single drop. So patiently and without complaint, but day by day becoming visibly more weak and thin, they worked hard, and yet observed this most rigorous fast to the full requirement of the Korán. Then as evening drew on, and the sun went down behind the rocks, it was with wistful eyes that these good Muslims begged me to tell them the true hour of sunset, which they would not on any account anticipate

by one single moment; so that it soon became my habit, as I always sat on deck before dinner, to have my watch in hand, and tell them as accurately as was possible when the moment came for them to break their fast. Then the earthen jars or *goollehs* were invariably dipped into the Nile, and long and grateful were the draughts of that delicious water which they swallowed, before their raging thirst was satisfied, and their burning lips cooled. Next came the chibouques, and pipes were lighted and smoked in perfect enjoyment; and last of all the evening meal, which the boy had been preparing, was eagerly but by no means greedily devoured. Now to keep the thirty days of Ramadan after this fashion is no slight self-denial; but on the contrary, is a very great penance indeed. I have heard Christians make light of the Muslim fast, on the ground that in hot countries comparatively little food is required; but surely they forget that if extreme heat diminishes the bodily appetite for solids, just in the same proportion does it increase the desire for liquids; while at all seasons of the year the abandonment of his pipe for even a few hours, is, to the Oriental of every rank of life, a privation which can scarcely be conceived by Europeans. And yet rough men and delicate boys

undergo this severe discipline for a whole month in every year, while they certainly make no hypocritical pretence at sanctity, for I never saw a single instance of any parade of piety, either on board or ashore. And I cannot but entertain a high respect for the sincerity and earnestness of the believers in *El Islam*, false though that religion is, when I see them so punctilious in their prescribed duties, so self-denying, so devout.

It is true that Ramadan imposes but little penance on the richer Muslims, who by the simple process of reversing day and night, doze away the hours of abstinence prescribed by the Korán, and feast through the livelong night; but to the fellaheen and all who must perforce pursue their daily callings and work, it is severe, and really terrible in the very stringent demands it makes, to the temporary distress of many and to the permanent injury of not a few whose constitutions are undermined by such excessive rigours.

During the great fast they are more diligent in their prayers than at other times, and I think engage in them more frequently. Even in the midst of the bustle of going up the cataract, when there was a pause after surmounting every successive rapid, one and another would take advantage of

the spare moments to spread his outer garment on the sand, or the rock, and unheeding, and unheeded by his comrades chattering all around, and wholly absorbed in contemplation of the goodness of the Deity, would go through the customary forms, and recite the required prayers. And all through the fast we have noticed how particular they have been in performing the preliminary ablutions, touching the face, hands, and feet with water, or for lack of water with sand; how exact they have been in the required formularies, standing with uplifted arms, while calling upon Allah; then prostrating themselves with forehead and nose to the ground, as the sand on those two features frequently showed, and which they thought it sinful to wipe off; how humbly and fervently they muttered their prayers in an inaudible voice, as they sat on their heels, turned now to the right, now to the left, while they are wrapt in meditation. This too was surely no trifling with religion, but carrying out the precepts of their Prophet with scrupulous fidelity and unflinching perseverance. Formality and routine it may be to a certain extent—mechanical and ceremonious their frequent prostrations and punctilious adherence to a fixed rule certainly are—yet let us give them due credit for their scrupulous obedience

to the requirements of their faith; and I repeat that such zeal, even though it be not according to knowledge, deserves credit, and attracts the sympathy and respect, if not the approval, of the Christian.

But I must return from this digression on the fast of Ramadan, to the little harbour of Mahatta above the Cataracts, where we are awaiting the sheikhs and their attendants to convoy us down the rapids. We have fired a gun to apprise Mrs. Chambers and her son and their party that we are preparing to start; and to warn F., who is photographing at Biggeh, that he must hurry on board; and soon the two sandals are seen approaching, and our party is complete. An early breakfast is soon despatched; loose articles are stowed away, in case of a deluge of water; the little duck-boat of Mr. Chambers is hauled on to our quarter-deck, where it is safe from the rocks; and the 'Southern Cross' is again filled with Nubians as noisy and chattering as before. We all take our places on deck to see our good ship shoot the rapids: Reis Ali and Reis Ibrahim post themselves at the helm; two Nubians take charge of each oar, and we are off towards 'El Bab,' fully expecting to pass the Cataracts in a very short time. But our course that day was destined to be short indeed; twice before

we reached rough water we were hard and fast upon a rock, which, besides endangering the boat, caused vexatious delays. Then we were rowed down the smallest of rapids; and then as the slightest breeze caused our pennant to flutter, the incorrigible sheikhs declared there was too much wind to attempt the descent to-day; so at ten o'clock in the morning we find ourselves moored to the bank, just above the Great Fall; the twenty-five Cataract men and the sheikhs are departed; and though we stormed at them in our fury, mocked, ridiculed, argued, and threatened, it was all to no purpose; here we are condemned to remain at all events till to-morrow; and then our farther detention depends on the wind, or rather the caprice of our pilots.

There was no help for it—we were at the mercy of these autocratic despots, chafe and fume as we might. So we made the best of it, and set ourselves to reconnoitre the Cataracts from every accessible position, and to examine the larger rapid in particular from every point of view. I should here state that in ascending our guides naturally do not select the larger falls for the path which our boat is to follow, but conduct it by any side channels of smaller breadth, where the volume and rush of water are the least, and by a

number of successive but weakened rapids in preference to a few only of greater height and force. The consequence was that ascending so very gradually, and spending so many hours amidst the troubled waters, familiarity had, in this instance, bred contempt, and we certainly did not appreciate as they deserved the height and rush of the falls. But the case was quite altered in the descent; here the sheikhs, from dread of rocks in the shallowest water, where the boat is forced down with great velocity, boldly choose the greater falls as their most prudent course. And now we are moored at the top of the biggest of all, within a hundred yards of *El Bab*, so that we have ample opportunity of studying its height and dimensions. Assuredly the very first glimpse we caught of it entirely altered our previous opinion; and if we despised it before in our ignorance, we certainly atoned for such presumption in our admiration now. I confess that I was perfectly amazed as I looked on that tremendous rush of water, and the more I gazed, the more did I marvel how any vessel could by possibility shoot it in safety. We spent the greater part of the day in its vicinity, and F. photographed it from various points of view; and we were never tired of watching the

magnificent race, as the great stream, confined in a long narrow channel between granite rocks, tore down the steep incline at a terrific pace; but I noticed that in the descent in this confined passage, the water striking violently against the rocks on either side, is dashed off into the centre, so that anything which floats over the top is borne along in the middle throughout the whole rush, almost on a crest of water, without any chance or even possibility of approaching the sides.

Soon some men appeared upon their logs in the water, preparing to descend *El Bab* for our special benefit. With a shout of triumph as they came to the great rush, they suffered themselves to be hurled down the cataract, sometimes submerged for the moment, but always contriving to keep their bodies as upright as possible, and by some inexplicable means, managing to retain a firm seat on the logs. By far the most difficult part seemed to be to get out of the current and to swim to land, when they reached the foot of the falls, and this evidently required all their strength and all their skill; for the rest, when they were used to it, and knew how to set about it, was evidently a mere matter of nerve; not however to be rashly attempted by the uninitiated, as the sad fate of a

young Englishman sufficiently proves, who some years since, relying too much on his swimming powers, was drowned in making the attempt. No sooner were these adventurous Nubians emerged from the eddying waters, than each man, with his log upon his head, was seen scampering over the granite boulders towards us, dripping and shivering and naked; and as he came near, screaming for backsheesh, which he had certainly earned, and which we willingly gave. In the course of the afternoon, we had seen nearly a dozen of these men descend the Great Fall thus upon their logs; but one brave young fellow, discarding the log, went down with nothing to support him; and I noticed that it was not without great exertion that he could keep his body upright in the descent, and so, as it were standing in the water, he was hurled along at a fearful pace.

That evening we climbed the highest rock in the neighbourhood, and witnessed the most magnificent of the many splendid sunsets we had seen on the Nile. No words can paint the gorgeous colours or describe the delicate tints cast by the retiring orb of day in these latitudes; it is such a combination of vivid colours and blending hues as cannot be conceived by those who have never seen

it; and we watched it from the deck or the shore every evening with undiminished admiration. In my humble judgment, a sunset is always incomparably finer than a sunrise; and striking though the latter is from high Swiss mountains and elsewhere on occasions, it can never, I think, compete on equal terms with the evening glow which tinges the distant snow-covered heights with a rosy blush. Certainly in Egypt, on all the many mornings when I watched the rising of the sun, I never noticed anything peculiarly beautiful, above what always accompanies the first appearance of that luminary on a bright morning all over the world; whereas the most unobservant and prosaic can scarcely fail to remark the lighting up of the western skies, and the brilliant and varying hues to which sunset every evening gave birth.

During the day we had collected specimens of syenite and granite and porphyry from the rocks with which we were surrounded; and we had gained bird's eye views of the whole Cataracts from a lofty peak, whence we could see all at a glance. The tent, too, had been brought from Philæ, and it was a work of some difficulty to pitch it among the granite rocks near our boat. However Braheem and our Arabs proved themselves skilful in

emergencies, and it was securely fixed, and well banked round with sand at the bottom, to exclude draught; and when in the evening Mrs. Chambers and her maid retired within it for the night, with Braheem reposing on the sand outside as a guard, our remaining guests were accommodated with couches on the divans of the saloon, and we promised ourselves a very early start on the morrow, and an exciting scene, as we were hurried on the crest of the water down the now highly-respected *Bab*.

Accordingly we were all stirring at a very early hour, and soon after daybreak the tent was struck, and safely packed on board. It is the grand feast of Bairam, for Ramadan came to an end last night, or 'is dead,' as the Arabs say, and the following day is a festival of considerable importance, very much as our great fast of Lent is followed by the high festival of Easter. So when we came on deck at sunrise, we were greeted by Reis Mohammed with extra salaams and repeated good wishes; nay, the good old fellow must kiss the back of our hand and then put it to his forehead, in token of respect; and then he presented each of us with a huge bun or roll, from which we broke off a small piece and ate, before returning it, as was expected.

Then salaams, touching the breast, lips, and forehead with the tips of the fingers, were exchanged with all our Arabs, who were scrupulously dressed in new and gay clothing; but who had throughout the fast worn none but the shabbiest, oldest, most patched and torn garments. Our men looked really smart in their gay attire; all were in red tarboosh and white turban, all in blue robes, beneath which many wore gay-coloured embroidered vests, and some had an outer garment or cloak, lined with silk, and with a profusion of silver bullion on the tassels by which it was fastened.

The ceremonious congratulations concluded, we despatched breakfast with all haste, and were barely ready for the start, when to our joy as well as surprise, the Nubians arrived in a body, at once came on board, and we were under way. I believe I am not wronging these worthies, when I add that this unwonted punctuality and despatch was due to the Feast of Bairam, rather than to any desire to humour our impatience to be off, which from first to last they never could understand; for later in the day the feast was to be kept with rejoicings and entertainments, such as the Muslims love; so they condescended to fulfil their engagement with us with unusual alacrity.

The sheikhs then took their places at the helm: the eight oars were manned by sixteen sturdy Nubians; others are standing at the bows armed with long poles, and we gently float on to the verge of '*El Bab.*' Up to this moment all had been chattering, screeching and grinning with the usual din; but at this critical moment every voice is hushed and perfect silence prevails as we shoot over the upper edge; a log of wood was here thrown into the current a dozen yards before the nose of our boat, and that was the guide which the steersman should follow all down the rapid descent. It certainly was a grand sight to witness; for in a moment we were in the very middle of the rushing water, borne along on the top of its crest; not a word was spoken, but every eye was intently watching the rocks on either side; while Braheem standing in the gangway was crossing himself rapidly and invoking the aid of all the saints for the safety of his boat. In a very few moments we had reached the foot of the rapid; and then the men dipped their oars into the foaming water and strained their utmost to pull us out of the roaring current to the bank. So well did the good ship answer to her helm, that as her bows dipped in this furious turmoil, she scarcely shipped any

water, and we floated gently and easily to the shore, where we were to take breath and recover, before we made another start. But before we reached the bank, and when scarcely out of the rapids, there was a general unloosing of tongues; and tenfold from the momentary silence were the shouts and cries of our men. Then there was a general shaking of hands all round, and congratulations that the big fall was behind us; even our old enemies, Sheikhs Ali, Ibrahim, and Suleiman, who had detained us so long in the ascent, came forward to take our hands; while one, according to general usage, seized the tarboosh from the head of the delighted Braheem, and clapped it on his own, nor could it be redeemed until more backsheesh had been handed out.

After a short respite we moved off again, but were soon upon a rock, which the rapid currents made it difficult to avoid. We were delayed a long time on that rock, with the water boiling and eddying all round us; and it was only by great exertions and wonderful activity in swimming to outlying rocks, warping with ropes, and skipping from boulder to boulder, in the water and under the water as often as out of it, that these amphibious Nubians at length got us off, and we passed

down a comparatively quiet reach. Then a little breeze rippled the surface of the river, and there was a threat of anchoring at the bank for another day; but our indignant protests, and a momentary lull of the wind, had the effect of bringing them to a better mind. Some time after we came to more rapids, and then to another 'gate,' which, though not fit to compare to its big brother, is a rush of water of no mean volume and force. Below this we saw a Frenchman's dahabeah, which we had passed at Kalabshe, laid up at the bank, for she had been damaged against the rocks in her descent; and indeed at the pace and with the force the rushing water hurls a boat down the rapids, it is not wonderful that a hole is sometimes knocked in her bottom; it is rather marvellous that any boat can escape. I am sure Braheem was pleased enough to find his property safe from such danger, and it seemed a relief to all on board to know that the Cataracts were behind us.

Now all this delay and danger and difficulty might be avoided with the greatest ease, and at a very small cost of labour and expense. Perhaps it would be too much to expect in such a country as Egypt, that locks could be made, and one of the smaller side channels converted into a navigable

canal, up and down which the native boats could freely pass, to the great and manifest advantage of the people. But at any rate, the succession of smaller rapids at the side, which is the course now adopted in the ascent, might, with very little trouble, be prepared, when the Nile is at its lowest, by clearing out a channel of sufficient depth and removing obstructing and projecting rocks, so that a comparatively smooth and easy course should be secured, at such a gentle inclination, and with such sufficient breadth, as to remove all risk of accidents and render the ascent and descent feasible in all weathers. It is obvious too that the use of a stationary windlass or a winch erected above the larger rapids would very much simplify the present crude arrangement, wherein, through lack of order and method, not a fourth part of the available strength is brought into efficient use. But I fear that from a people with whom precedent is the only argument to be listened to, such improvements are not to be expected. Indeed the Egyptians are the very last people to accept propositions for their amelioration, however laudable and however palpable they may be. As a proof of this, see the pertinacity with which they still cling to those clumsy instruments for irrigation, the

'sakia' and 'shadoof.' If there is one thing more than another which would benefit the fellaheen, it would be some easy and efficient method of raising the water from the Nile to the level of the bank above. With this view a small steam-engine has more than once been introduced by the Pasha, but notwithstanding its manifest efficiency, and taking into account its original cost, the saving of time and labour, and therefore of money, which it effected, and the immense volume of water it continuously raised, it met with no favour in the eyes of these bigoted people, devoted as they are to the customs of their forefathers, and determined as they are, not to deviate from the beaten track. Even that simple mechanical contrivance, the pump, fared no better, when it was recommended for their adoption; and yet it would, at the smallest cost, accomplish their ends, and diminish their toil; but it was never the custom of their ancestors, and who are they that they should venture on innovations and new-fangled notions suggested by the infidel and the barbarian?

A very easy pull in calm water (for all the spirit of the river has been beaten out of it in the Cataracts) brought us in an hour's time from the foot of the rapids to Assouan, which we reached at

mid-day; and here we remained a day for examining the boat after her severe handling, for taking in provisions, and allowing our men to refresh themselves on shore on their great day of festival; as well as for the transaction of certain other important business, which shall be fully detailed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

ASSOUAN TO THEBES—EGYPTIAN JUSTICE.

I HAVE already said that Mr. Chambers and his party were our guests on board the 'Southern Cross' during the descent of the Cataract. The reason of this was, that when they reached Assouan a few days before us, in going up the river, the reis of their dahabeah, doubtless instructed by the owner, had bribed the Cataract sheikhs to pronounce that boat unfit to make the passage of the rapids; and so, through the collusion of these rascals, our friends were forced either to forego their Nubian tour altogether, or to hire a native *murkab* above the Cataracts, and endure as well as they could for three weeks the dirt and discomfort of that wretched craft. As they were determined not to be disappointed of their trip, they chose the latter of these alternatives; and uncomfortable enough they had been; for though they took tents with them, and slept on shore whenever they

could, it was impossible to escape the horrors which any native boat must necessarily entail: they were cramped for room, stifled for want of air, and disgusted by the general absence of cleanliness and by the presence in vast numbers of insects of an objectionable character. And what was the reason of this shameful imposition on the part of the captain of their own boat? It was simply because the 'Bruin' was a smart boat, well appointed, and in excellent condition, and so her owners did not care to risk her in the rapids, where we have seen there is not a little probability that injury might accrue. But they had guaranteed in the contract to take her up the Cataracts and they were under an engagement to go as far as Wady Halfeh: moreover the boat, though of considerable size, was not larger than others which we met with in Nubia, and as an unanswerable argument against her unfitness, she had made the passage up and down the Cataract the previous year. And yet those unconscionable sheikhs had had the effrontery to declare that she drew too much water, was too deep in the bows, and too broad in the stern, and no arguments could avail to persuade them to reverse their verdict, to which it subsequently appeared

they had been instigated by the bribes of the reis. This was a thorough specimen of Egyptian double-dealing; and it was an imposition to which no Englishman could calmly submit; so Mr. Chambers determined to lay a formal complaint before the governor at Assouan, and begged our countenance and assistance in stating the case, which we most willingly gave.

Accordingly no sooner did we reach Assouan, than we sent to make an appointment with the governor, and at the hour he suggested went up in a body with our two dragomans to his house, but the governor was not to be found. Then we went to the large spreading sycamore, where he usually held his court, and under which we had previously seen him administering justice, after true patriarchal custom, but he was not there; and soon we learnt from the evasive answers of some of his attendants who stood near, that he did not intend to keep the appointment with us which he had made. We however were determined to persevere, so we hunted out the scribe, who was sitting on a mat in the darkest, dingiest and dirtiest of rooms, with rush mats on the divans as the only furniture in the office of this man of law. After a good deal of unnecessary palaver, and many vain attempts to

postpone our interview till another day—for was not this a great festival, and was it not already late in the afternoon?—we persuaded him to take down our depositions, which he did with considerable quickness and ease, as he sat on his mat with a slip of paper spread out on the palm of his left hand, and the reed in his right, and the inkhorn in his girdle. Our statement amounted to a protest against the infamous conduct of the reis of the 'Bruin' and the sheikhs of the Cataract, and we demanded that justice might be done, and the extra expenses of the Nubian *murkab*, amounting to some 30*l*., might be refunded by those who had caused that unnecessary expenditure. Though the scribe wrote out the story we gave him with great rapidity, yet it occupied some little time to make it quite clear; and the more so as after being well considered in English, it was obliged to be put to the dragoman Giovanni in Italian, and by him translated from Italian into Arabic before the scribe could write it down. As soon as we had secured this document, we again set out to seek the governor, determined to ferret him out, wherever he might be; but he was not to be found at his house, and there we were politely told it was impossible to see him on the festival though he

would gladly make an appointment for the morrow. Accustomed now to Oriental prevarication and procrastination, and indignant at the deception he was practising upon us, for the governor had himself fixed the hour for this interview, we declared we would not remain another day, and then we threatened Cairo and the Pasha, which speedily had the desired effect. For now a very smart young fellow, whom we had not hitherto seen, stepped forward and begged us to follow him; and then taking us through the town, where we found all the bazaars shut, he led us into the presence of the great man, whom we found seated on a divan, smoking a cigarette, surrounded by a dozen companions very gaily dressed, and in various costumes. The governor was especially smart, in semi-European dress; for he wore boots, full scarlet trousers, bright blue frock coat, likewise very full and with scarlet facings, and an immense amount of gold lace, bullion, and braid. He was not in the least abashed at our appearance, though he had so grossly forfeited his word in failing to appear at the time he had appointed; but to an Oriental even of the highest rank this is a matter of every-day habit, and I suppose never gives him a qualm. So he stepped down from the divan, and received

us most graciously, and then he shook hands; for he affects to ape European manners as well as dress, though neither of them tend to raise him in the opinion of his fellow-townsmen. Of course we did not mention business, but talked of various matters through the interpreter, until we had been duly served with coffee and pipes; and then the governor read our statement, and heard our complaint, and immediately sent off a *cavass* to bring the four Cataract sheikhs before him; after which he rose and adjourned the enquiry to his own house, whither we all accompanied him.

And now etiquette required that the governor, as soon as we arrived under his own roof, should play the host again, for hospitality is a virtue most extensively practised by all classes in Egypt; so coffee was again brought and then pipes for the whole party; and these chibouques, with their long ornamental stems and huge amber mouth-pieces, were the most magnificent I ever saw. Then we were regaled with a short-cake or pastry, well powdered with sugar, and peculiar to the festival celebrated to-day. First a servant spread a napkin over our knees as we sat on the divan, and when we had eaten, two others brought in a ewer of water and a basin, both of brass and of an antique

shape, the former with a long narrow spout, the latter with a perforated false bottom, reminding one of a colander, and with a receptacle for soap standing out from the centre. Then while one servant holds the basin beneath, the other pours water over our outstretched hands, and a third carries off the napkin. This again is exactly after the custom not only of the ancient Egyptians, as represented in the paintings of the tombs; but of all the nations of antiquity as described by Homer and Virgil, and to which reference is made in the Book of Kings.*

By this time the four sheikhs had arrived, and surly enough they looked, as they came in and saw us, and learned that we had lodged a complaint against them. They immediately retired into an adjoining room with the scribe; who first read to them our written accusation, and then wrote down from their own mouth their defence, and it is worthy of remark that the written accusation on the part of the prosecutor, and the written reply of the defendants, are the very counterpart of the ancient method of the law-courts in the times of the early Egyptians as described by Diodorus. Then they all reappeared: the prosecutors' statement was first read before the court, then the defendants' reply; then questions were asked; cross-examina-

* 2 Kings iii. 11.

tion followed, and now prevarication and lying began. The sheikhs shifted their ground, and as one excuse after another was proved worthless, fresh motives were adduced, and new reasons alleged for their refusal to take the 'Bruin' up the Cataracts. But though they were convicted on the clearest evidence, the governor was evidently anxious to screen them; indeed from the first he had shown himself most unwilling to expose them, and I do not doubt that he had ample reason to fear the retaliation of those powerful vindictive men, should he make them his foes: moreover the two dragomans, influenced doubtless by the recollection that they would be completely at the mercy of these sheikhs when they came up the Cataracts again, evidently softened down our accusations, and could not be persuaded to interpret accurately all we said. Accordingly, after two hours' palaver, finding we could get nothing but evasive replies, we saw it was useless to prolong the discussion; so taking up the documents which the scribe had drawn up in Arabic, and promising to pursue the enquiry before the Pasha in Cairo, we thanked the courteous governor for his hospitality, and retired, much to the satisfaction, I doubt not, of that perplexed official, who had certainly been

placed on the horns of a dilemma, as he was evidently extremely anxious to satisfy the just demands we made, though at the same time restrained, as he did not scruple to intimate to us, by terror of the Nubian sheikhs.

A portly personage who thought himself bound to be present at this court of justice was the self-styled 'English Consul,' but nobody had ever heard of his being appointed to such an office, or being accredited on behalf of Great Britain in any way; neither, so far as we could gather, had he ever performed any service for an English traveller, or given any help in a mercantile transaction. So much was this the case, that though we had a letter of introduction to him from Mustafa Aga at Thebes, and we had been assured of his aid in making arrangements with the Cataract sheikhs, when he would have been really useful, he had scrupulously avoided interfering in the matter. Now too, though he assisted by his presence, and consumed much of the governor's excellent tobacco, he took no part in the question, nor uttered a single word from beginning to end. Perhaps he may have been watching the case on behalf of the British crown; if so, we heartily thank him for his valuable services. This worthy also combined with his consular duties, the

more laborious, and I trust more lucrative, office of Sheikh of the Camels, which will answer to the position of one licensed to let post-horses for hire in an English town; for Assouan, at the end of the navigable Nile, so far as the majority of vessels is concerned, does a large business by land, and from hence there are several tracks across the desert, to sundry ports on the Red Sea and elsewhere.

I may add here that at Mr. Chambers' request, I subsequently drew up a full statement of the whole affair, which on our arrival at Thebes was placed in Mustafa Aga's hands, and by him immediately forwarded by runners to the British consul at Cairo, and the result was, that on Mr. Chambers' arrival at that city, the owner of the 'Bruin' was compelled to refund every piastre of the expenses claimed; so that justice was at last done, in a pecuniary point of view, though the sheikhs of the Cataract were not mulcted as they deserved from the large share they had in this infamous transaction.

I apprehend that in the above case we had a very fair sample of the general administration of justice in Egypt. There was never, I think, the least doubt in the mind of the governor of Assouan as to which party had right on its side; but alarm at the future vengeance of those savage sheikhs over-

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powered even the customary acquiescence in European demands; and with every desire to conciliate our good will, and to smooth down our indignation, he concluded that prudence forbade any decisive action, and judged it more expedient to let us retire unsatisfied even at the hazard of a complaint at Cairo, than to draw upon himself the certain wrath of the sheikhs. And who shall blame him for such injustice? The question of equity and law and right seldom come before the minds of these local rulers; but if the judgment be not decided by a bribe, then personal convenience, personal favour, personal prejudice and expediency are the motives which influence the verdict in favour of the accused or defender, as the case may be. It is on these grounds that Europeans, who are far too highly estimated in Egypt, and whose approbation those in office invariably court, never prefer a charge against one of their wretched sailors, or any of the oppressed fellaheen, but the supposed offender is handed over to punishment, often without permission to say a word in self-defence. It is sad to think what oppression hence ensues; and how the powerful tyrannise over their inferiors, in a country where invariably the weakest goes to the wall.

That evening we treated all our men to pipes

and coffee, at one of the coffee-shops in the town; and as we desired to see the interior of one of these popular places of Arab entertainment, at Braheem's suggestion, we accompanied him and our crew to the scene. Entering by a low doorway, we found a spacious room partially lighted by two Chinese lanterns. Long divans, covered with rush mats, ran along either wall, one end being occupied by a stove, whereon coffee pots were simmering. The good lady who presided over the festivities, and who was the veriest hag of dark complexion I ever beheld, received us most graciously, placed us in the centre of the divan, and served us with coffee, which was, without exception, by very far the best I ever tasted in my life. Our sailors were soon in perfect enjoyment, reclining on the divans, sipping coffee, and smoking tobacco, to which nearly all of them added the intoxicating hasheesh, which we had never previously seen in use, but which is still greedily sought after by the lower orders in their coffee-shops; and is doubtless a remnant of the ancient custom of burning the seeds of hemp, and inhaling the fumes until intoxication ensued, so graphically described by Herodotus.*

* Book iv. chap. 75. See Rawlinson's notes on the passage.

The Nile was now so low, that on leaving Assouan we were obliged to take a pilot to steer us through an intricate channel at the back of the island of Elephantine, and the 'Bruin' followed closely in our wake. Several times that day we and our consort grounded on sandbanks, of which kind of detention we anticipated not a little, as the season was far advanced; and our forebodings were certainly realised, even beyond our most gloomy anticipations; many hours being consumed, almost every day, in trying to extricate our boats from the soft sand in which they were perpetually embedding themselves.

Our first halt was at Kom-Ombos, where we meant to stop for a couple of hours, but in reality we were detained here, and in the immediate neighbourhood, for the best part of three days, as a strong head wind drove us under the bank, and though doubtless we could have rowed against it, such an innovation was not to be thought of for a moment. Braheem, however, to whom we had communicated our ideas on the subject in the morning, thought proper, rather in temper than with any serious intention of advancing, to order the reis to cast off moorings, and the men to get to their oars. This created a mutiny on board,

for the poor fellows, who in consequence of our unexpected detention by head winds, had exhausted their stock of bread, and had been living on such short commons as we could procure at the villages, were in no mood for unusual labour; so with one consent they jumped out of the boat and deserted. We were in happy ignorance of this flight, and of its cause, till hearing some altercation, and looking out of the cabin windows, we saw all our men running up the bank, and making off across the fields, closely pursued by the enraged Braheem. Of course we quickly followed, and Mr. Chambers seeing the commotion from the deck of the 'Bruin,' which was moored just below us, seized his double-barrelled gun, and joined in the chase. There was, however, no need for much violent exertion. At the first summons all the men returned to the bank, where, joined by this time by the crew of the 'Bruin,' they sat themselves down in a circle, and, every man speaking at the top of his voice, related their wrongs. The burden of their cry was, *ma feesh esh*,* 'no bread,' and they pointed to their empty stomachs with doleful

* The word 'esh' literally signifies 'life,' just as we call bread the 'staff of life,' and our more mercurial neighbours designate a favourite stimulant as 'eau de vie.'

faces and tearful eyes. But the next moment these impulsive overgrown children, convinced that we had no wish to impose upon them an unusual task, were on the broad grin of complete contentment, and when they found we bore no malice at their feint of desertion, their momentary indignation was changed to intense gratitude; and each man kissed our hand, and then put it to his forehead, in proof of his special respect, sinking his own hand down to the ground, after the fashion of his ancestors, as described by Herodotus,* and still seen in the sculptures; and then putting it to his lips and forehead, in token of perfect reconciliation; and so we all returned to our respective boats.

We had ample time to examine thoroughly the temple of Kom-Ombos; which, like a church with double chancel and nave, is of unwonted shape; being, in fact, the union of two distinct temples, with parallel courts, porticoes, and shrines. One of these is dedicated to the crocodile-headed god Savak, and in consequence the crocodile forms a conspicuous feature in the sculpture and hieroglyphics with which the walls and pillars are decorated. The columns which still remain are

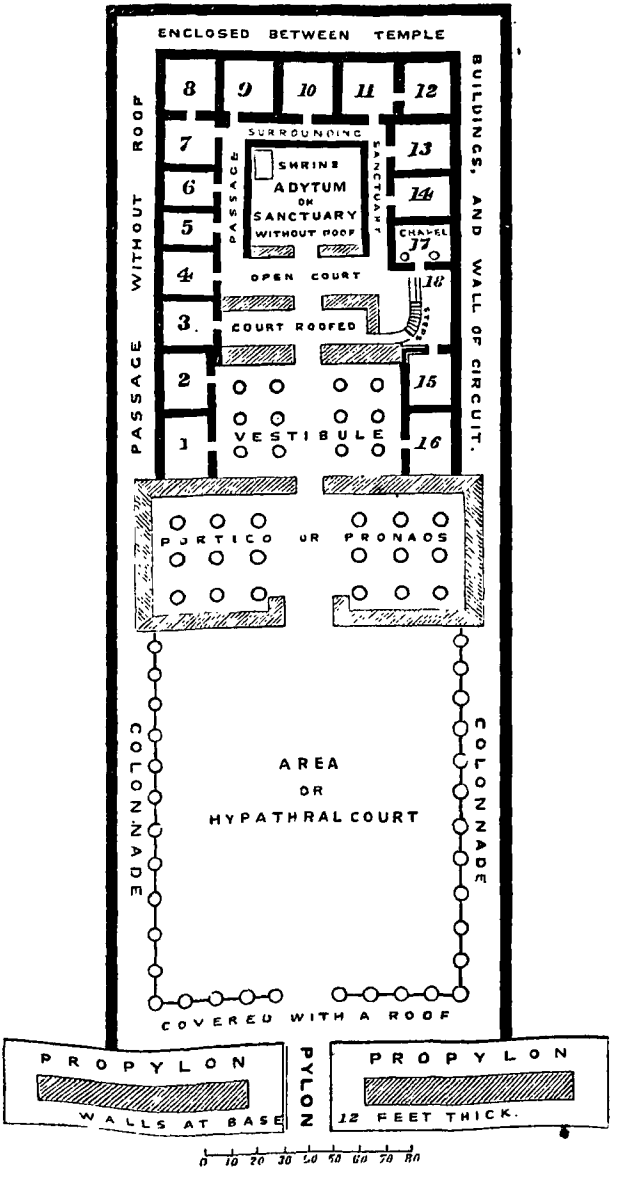
* Book ii. chap. 80.

exceedingly noble, and their capitals are very magnificent. These twin temples are more than half buried in sand, consequently in some portions we found ourselves standing opposite to what would be the cornice of the ceilings; and though we had to creep on hands and knees, we were just below the roof of what was in reality a very lofty hall. This gave us an admirable opportunity of examining, as we could do in no other instance, the crowned asp, the brooding hawk, and vulture, and the rows of agathodæmons, which are usually seen high up over the porticos. We could see too and copy the very legible Greek inscriptions with which the lintels above the lofty doorways are furnished.

Still floating very slowly, and still detained under banks by northerly winds, we at length arrived within a few miles of Hagar Silsilis, the narrow neck into which the Nile is contracted by the encroaching rocks. We were anxious to see the quarries here, which furnished most of the stone of which the temples are built, and the rock-hewn temples, which we had passed in a favourable breeze on our way up. So we ran down to them in the sandal, leaving the heavy dahabeah to follow at leisure. These quarries are of enormous

extent, and it was curious to see how those ancient masons had cut out large square blocks of stone, and to trace the marks of their tools, still sharp in the living rock. Here and there thin walls of stone had been left, which seemed to divide quarry from quarry; and through these many holes may be observed, in all probability for the ropes by which the blocks were lowered. There is scarcely anything in Egypt which tells its tale more graphically, and speaks more plainly of the methodical regularity in their work, of the laborious diligence, and of the skill of the early inhabitants, than these quarries; they are not only spread over so large a surface, but they are so deep—cut down in successive layers from the top to nearly the level of the river; and the bulk of stone cut out with such labour must have been so prodigious, that one stands aghast in contemplating the amazing areas thus hollowed out.

We had some difficulty in rowing across the river in this its narrowest part for many a league, for what with wind and current the waves were almost formidable; and here were more quarries almost as extensive as those on the eastern bank; and grottos, many in number, and rude in execution, containing grotesque figures cut in relief;



GROUND PLAN OF TEMPLE OF EDFOO (p. 109)

amongst others, the river Nile crowned with water-plants, and a figure, perhaps that of a king, carried on men's shoulders, and attended by others, bearing huge flappers, just as I have seen the Pope taken to the balcony of S. Giovanni in Laterano, when about to bless the populace therefrom. From Hagar Silsilis we had to row back to our dahabeah, which was still several miles behind, and it was not till long after dark, and with unwonted exertions, that our four sturdy Arabs brought us back to the 'Southern Cross,' which, with its saloons and cabins lighted up, looked like the hull of a large man of war, as we drew near on a stormy night, advancing inch by inch against the turbulent current, and in darkness such as might truly be called Egyptian.

We halted again at Edfoo, where F. took some capital photographs, and again at El Kab, both of which I mentioned in our upward journey, and we stopped a day at Esnè in order that the men might bake their last batch of bread which should serve them to the end of the trip. The attractions of Esnè were so great that it was difficult to collect our men from the coffee-shops; and many hours after the bread had been stowed on board, we were standing off and on awaiting the

return of some truant sailors, but it was impossible to be severe with them, the poor fellows had suffered such privations from short commons of late, that it was only natural they should indulge in the harmless enjoyment of coffee and tobacco, even though the latter might include a taste of their favourite hasheesh as well. At length the last laggard had been secured, and we floated away on the bright moonlit river, and soon after took to the oars and were speeding along at a famous pace when on a sudden crack we went, with all the impetus which a swift current and eight oars can impart, hard and fast on a sandbank. For hours we worked at the ropes and the poles; for hours at intervals our men in the water strained with all their might, with their backs against the boat; many and loud were the chants in which they invoked the help of Allah and Mohammed, but we could not make her stir one single inch. Then we fixed an anchor fifty yards away, and tried to warp our stubborn boat from the bed of sand to which she clung so tenaciously; but that was alike useless; and it was not till after we had spent ten hours on that bank and daylight had come, and we had hired a dozen men from a native craft, that the united strength of both crews at last released us.

I cannot describe the impatience with which at that particular moment we regarded these wretched delays; for we were now within a short day's journey of Thebes, where the accumulated letters of six weeks awaited us; and during all that time we had perforce heard nothing from home, or from Europe at large. And so we were longing for our letters with the most intense eagerness, and grudged every moment which seemed unnecessarily to intercept what we so ardently desired to obtain. But patience is a virtue to be learnt practically on the Nile, and now sandbank after sandbank seemed to rise on our course; head winds succeeded one another with little intervals; we floated very slowly with the stream; we moored under a bank for one and another reason; and at length rather with a view to active employment and to while away the time, than from any particular interest we then felt in antiquities or shooting, F. and I took a long pull in the sandal to visit the ruined temple of Erment, preferring to amuse ourselves on shore, and to await there the arrival of the dahabeah, than to crawl along so slowly as we had done of late, when our eagerness to reach Thebes, and devour the letters which we knew must be there, was becoming almost past endurance. Erment stood at some distance from the river, and we

traversed a broad plain on our way thither, and over vast mounds of the ruins of a former city, and amidst the scattered huts of the modern village, and at length followed by half the juvenile population of the place, we reached the few columns and other inconsiderable remains of what was once doubtless a large temple, but from the hieroglyphics and sculpture which remained, appeared to have been of inferior workmanship to many we had examined of late.

By the time we had rambled over the ruins and through the extensive village and back to the shore, the 'Southern Cross' floated down, so we joined her, and now the wind had dropped, and we put out the long sweeps, and that evening (March 8) at eight o'clock, we moored amidst several other dahabeahs to the well-known shore of Luxor, where quite a feast of home letters awaited us, how welcome, those only who have experienced a like deprivation for an equal period of time, can fully apprehend.

CHAPTER VI.

THEBES TO SIOOT—THE INSURRECTION OF 1865.

I MENTIONED in the last chapter that we reached Luxor on the night of March 8; and that having left that last vestige of comparative civilisation just six weeks before, we had since that period received no letter, seen no newspaper, and heard no news of any kind. I also observed that our downward voyage had been interrupted by head winds, which at the time we considered adverse, and prolonged by sandbanks on which we were continually stumbling, and at which we grumbled accordingly; but which in all human probability turned out in reality to be, by God's mercy, the providential means of saving our lives. For as the 'Southern Cross' swung round to her anchor off Luxor, and we were intent only upon our home letters, but not dreaming of any matter of local interest, we were hailed from the shore with the astounding news that an insurrection had broken

out lower down the river, that the insurgents were massacring all foreigners and native Christians; that the rebellion was spreading up the river very rapidly; and that orders from Cairo had been received by the governor that all boats arriving at Thebes should be detained until further notice.

These were indeed startling tidings to greet us on our return to Luxor, and it was not long before we were ashore eagerly making enquiries of our good friend Mustafa Aga, and of the occupants of the other boats, several of which we found congregated here. Long and late were our discussions, various our surmises; and many the suggestions and plans we formed. Some recommended to abandon the boats, and push across the desert on camels to Kosseir, and so reach Cairo by the Red Sea and Suez. However, nothing could be done till further tidings arrived; and as both Mustafa Aga and the Governor of Thebes had sent separate messengers to make enquiry at Keneh, we prepared to carry out our original plan of exploring the temples and tombs of Karnac, Luxor, and Thebes, which we had only imperfectly seen on our way up the river, and trusted that when the few days we intended to devote to those interesting remains of early times were expired,

we should hear satisfactory reports of the state of the country below, and be enabled to proceed on our voyage down the river.

News, indeed, came in rapidly enough, and from all quarters, but how to distinguish the false from the true, was the difficult problem which we all tried in vain to solve. Even the express messengers sent by the Governor of Thebes and Mustafa Aga were not to be trusted, so inveterate is the habit of untruth in the Arab, and so prone is he to magnify, enlarge, and invent, when seized, as he usually is on the least occasion, with a panic of terror. Some said that the insurgents were gaining ground, and were advancing up the river, burning, pillaging, and massacring wherever they went: others that the Pasha's troops had dispersed the rebels and had inflicted summary vengeance on them, exterminating whole villages, and barbarously murdering women and children whose husbands and fathers they had previously shot down. Then details of all sorts were given, indeed every hour brought some new report, but whether founded on fact or no, it was quite impossible even to surmise.

One thing, however, was quite certain, that a second message had arrived from Cairo repeating

the order to the governor to detain all boats then anchored at Thebes; so there we found ourselves fixed, and must endure the delay as patiently as we could, while the season, already late for descending the Nile, was ebbing away, and we saw the water getting lower and lower day by day, and we knew that every hour of detention was increasing our chance of running upon sandbanks, upon many of which we already knew from past experience we must infallibly drift, and stick fast in many cases for a considerable portion of a day.

At length our patience was quite exhausted. We had seen all the lions of Thebes; had paid repeated visits to the gigantic ruins of Karnac; had explored the tombs of the kings and many other tombs in those wild desolate ravines on the African desert. Moreover, we were living at an enormous expense, paying every man a large sum to his dragoman daily for the expenses of the voyage, so that if the said dragoman was not ill-satisfied with the delay we were chafing under this additional pecuniary infliction. And again, many of us were looking forward to a tour in Syria and the Holy Land, and Easter was drawing near, and time was a serious object. On all these accounts we were eager to be off, and as the various rumours

seemed to be generally more in favour of the Pasha's troops, and of the restoration of order, we summoned a conclave of English travellers on the quarter-deck of our dahabeah, and after much discussion, ourselves and the English occupants of two other boats determined on the morrow to proceed down the river; feeling our way from point to point, by stopping at every town to make enquiry of the governors; keeping as far from the banks and as near mid-stream as the intricate channel of the Nile would allow; and resolving to continue in close company for mutual protection, so that whenever one of the three boats stuck fast upon a sandbank, which was continually happening, the crews of her two consorts would go to her assistance; and this they were ready enough to do, so terrified were the poor Arabs at the very name of the rebels.

Accordingly, the next day saw us take leave of our good friend Mustafa and his intelligent sons, and the no less civil and courteous governor; not, however, till we had all signed a paper which I had prepared at their request, exonerating them from all blame in our departure, and taking upon ourselves the whole responsibility of our safety, and declaring that we left entirely at our own risk

and contrary to their advice. Then our boat first cast off her moorings and gently dropped down the stream, closely followed by her two consorts, our friends pleasantly observing that the church militant should by rights take the lead; while Mustafa's big gun thundered forth salute upon salute by way of adieu, and other boats at anchor gave us a similar parting salutation, all of which we duly returned according to Nile usage. The day was intensely hot; all our flags and pennants hung hopelessly drooping, with not a breath of wind to stir them; the river shone like molten gold in the brilliant sunshine; the hottest glare reflected back from the red mountains; the rarefied air quivered on the desert sand; on deck the thermometer in the sun pointed to 140°, and then I removed it below, as a precaution against injury, as the mercury had run up to the farthest end of the tube; the cabins too felt like furnaces; even in the saloon with skylight off, windows and doors open, and Venetian blinds shutting out every ray of sun, the thermometer marked 99°. It was a glorious heat, such as we had never felt in Nubia, even when within the tropics at Wady Halfeh; and it was a goodly scene, in that classic spot, within view of the grand remains, on either bank of the river, of

hundred-gated Thebes, backed by the red rocks of the desert, and the golden sunshine lighting up the whole; while the three noble-looking dahabeahs slowly followed one another down the stream, now paddling with the interminable monotonous song without which no Arab can handle an oar; now drifting with the current, the latter mode of progression far more to the taste of those laziest specimens of the human race.

And now we began to load all our guns and rifles and revolvers with ball, both by way of precaution for resistance in case of attack, and also by way of encouragement to our frightened crews, whose faces unmistakably betokened the abject terror which lurked within their breasts. Including arms of all sizes, we had very nearly fifty barrels amongst us, and we mustered above fifty souls on board our three boats, so that we were quite a formidable little fleet, should we be attacked by any number of timorous half-armed rebels. And so the first day and night wore away, occasionally varied by the leading boat, which acted as pioneer to the others, running hard and fast on a sandbank, from which however the united crews of all the boats seldom failed to dislodge her in a little time. More than once too we had a violent altercation on board

the boats with our respective dragomans and the crew; all of whom eagerly desired to shelter themselves during the night under the protection of a town, where the usual guards could be obtained. To this, however, we would not listen, and so by the middle of the second day we reached Keneh; where the surly old governor, whom we woke up from his siesta, and who was proportionably sulky, gave us no information on which we could rely; while his coffee and his pipes were as bad as his temper, and as little to our taste as his reserve. However he did not forbid our advance down the river, nor even recommend us to halt; so at sunset we floated on again, the heat seeming rather to increase than diminish, though our course was due north. The following day we floated a good deal and rowed a little occasionally, and in the evening reached Farshoot, under whose friendly protection we anchored for the night.

As we were now approaching nearer the disaffected district, rumours of disturbance increased, and friendly warnings against continuing our course were called out from the bank. One woman especially, who ran down to the river's brink, and implored us earnestly not to venture farther on, made a profound impression on our crews. She de-

clared that the rebels were firing upon all dahabeahs and killing all the Hawagers they could meet with; and called out from the bank that all our throats would be infallibly cut if we persisted in our course; and when she saw that we paid little attention to her warning, which by the way must have been given from no other motive than pure charity and compassion for us in what she supposed to be most imminent danger, she screamed after us that we should find at Farshoot an English engineer, who had been fired upon and wounded by the rebels in his progress up the river, and from him we should learn that the report she had given was true. Accordingly we no sooner cast anchor at Farshoot, than we sought out the wounded Englishman, who had indeed had a narrow escape of his life, and who told us of the murderous attack made upon him the previous week. He was in the service of the Pasha, and in charge of a large sugar factory at Farshoot, and had been down to Cairo to superintend the making of a new crank for his steam engine, which he was bringing up in his own dahabeah; and he was in company with another dahabeah, with some Italian gentlemen on board; the two boats being towed up the river by a government steam-tug. He had reached Gow el Kebeer, which was the very

heart of the disturbed district, and here he found the Pasha with a body of troops firing several villages, and summarily shooting down the inhabitants, a number of whose dead bodies he saw in a long row where they had been executed. He went ashore, and volunteered to leave his steamer for the Pasha's use; but when this was declined, he immediately went on board and continued his journey. Scarcely however had he gone five or six miles from Gow, when on turning a sharp elbow of the river, where the navigable channel was very near the bank, and where a large grove of palms afforded concealment, a body of about five hundred rebels suddenly appeared from among the trees on the bank. Their first act was to shoot dead the helmsman of the steamer, when the steamer at once drifted in to the shore; they also killed at the first discharge the reis or captain of the steamer, and the second reis, or steersman, of the Englishman's dahabeah, and wounded or killed five or six of the sailors. The Italians at once jumped overboard, and hid themselves as well as they could behind their *sandal*; and when discovered and fired upon, they were seen ducking under water, and thus trying to escape, but whether they succeeded or no, was not ascertained. For now the English engineer

had enough to occupy his thoughts, the rebels having by this time boarded his boat; and as three of them armed with rifles advanced into the cabin with the express purpose of taking his life, and the cabin was not twelve feet long, his chance of avoiding death seemed remote indeed. However the first bullet deliberately fired at him, though it grazed his forehead did not break the skin, or otherwise inflict a wound. The second rebel's aim was not more successful, the bullet in this case passing through his cap, just above the top of his head; while he managed to knock up the barrel of the third gun, just as the trigger was being pulled, and it was fired into the skylight. Though their rifles were ineffectually discharged, it would still have gone hard with the Englishman, in the hands of three savage and fanatical rebels, had not an alarm been sounded at that critical moment from the bank, which though it turned out to be groundless, yet had the effect of making the rebels hurry quickly on shore, not however forgetting to carry with them all they could lay hands on at the moment. Taking advantage of their momentary absence, the sailors, who were attached to their master, quietly cut the tow rope which connected them with the steamer; the consequence of which

was that they drifted out with the current from the shore; and then, unperceived by the rebels, who were now busy with the other dahabeah, they gently loosened the sail, which soon carried them some little way into the stream. As soon however as the insurgents observed them, they peremptorily ordered the sailors to bring their vessel back; for, said they, 'we will cut the throat of the Christian Englishman,' which must have been pleasant information to him, as he listened to the threat. In reply, the sailors, who seem to have behaved with remarkable fidelity and courage, declared that he was already dead; and at this moment shots were heard in the distance, the Pasha's troops were reported to be advancing, and the rebels made off to the desert and the rocks. After this, said our informant, we made all haste to sail away, and we never stopped till we reached this place (Farshoot); and since then the Pasha has been taking summary vengeance on the insurgents, hunting them down, burning whole villages, and, if report be true, making wholesale slaughter in the disaffected district, and with no little barbarity carrying out his purpose of striking a blow which should intimidate all would-be rebels for the future.

That night our three boats were moored under

the town of Farshoot, with a double number of guards armed with rifles, patrolling on the bank; and by dint of a very early start next morning and with the help of a favourable breeze, we reached Girghey by the next evening. Here we fell in with a steamer and several barges filled with soldiers on their way to Keneh, to protect that town and overawe the rebels; and from the governor here we learnt many particulars of the rebellion and its origin, which shall be related farther on. We are now advised to haul down our flags, in order to avoid attracting the attention of the rebels, many of whom are still lurking in the neighbourhood. We are cautioned on no account to go ashore, and by no means to anchor near the eastern bank; indeed to keep as near the middle of the river as we can.

Next day, with a hot khamseen wind blowing from the south, we reached Souhag. This was now the fifth day since we had left Thebes, and the heat had increased day by day, till it reached its climax now. The hot wind from the desert blew upon our cheeks like the blast from a furnace, and it was no slight matter to walk, though but a few hundred yards, from the water's edge to the governor's house. We found his excellency in

his shirt sleeves, smoking in his divan, which was darkened to exclude the frightful heat; while mats were swung before the doors to create a gentle draught; and a sakka or water-carrier incessantly deluged the floor from his water-skin to cool the atmosphere. Our host was exceedingly friendly and communicative, and after the usual pipes and coffee, was not disinclined to speak of the recent troubles, and gave us much information on the summary method employed by the Pasha in reducing a disaffected people to obedience. It was indeed *Veni, vidi, vici*, with him with a vengeance. No sooner did the news reach Cairo, than he set off in person with several thousand troops, steaming up the Nile. Arrived at the scene of disturbance, there was no battle to be fought, no resistance thought of for a moment; all he had to do, was to punish and intimidate; so he at once executed five hundred men; of whom two hundred were shot, two hundred were beheaded, and one hundred hung on the neighbouring trees. Then the villages were fired, and as many of the ringleaders had escaped to the rocks in the desert, the sheikhs were ordered to post guards in all the passes with instructions to shoot down the rebels as they came in, when compelled by hunger and

thirst, as sooner or later must infallibly be the case; and as a pretty sure guarantee that the order might not be evaded, the truly Oriental notice was appended—a notice too of no empty form, but of very terrible meaning—that if all the rebels denounced were not forthcoming by a certain date, the heads of the sheikhs would go for those they had suffered to escape. A tall gaunt officer who was present at our interview with the governor, leaning on his heavy cavalry sword and twisting his long mustachios, smiled grimly at the revolting details, and looked as if he rather enjoyed the work he had been about. Declining the further proffered hospitalities of the courteous governor, and cautioned anew to be wary in our voyage in this the very heart of the disaffected district, we lost no time in hoisting our sails, and running before the southern wind; but whether the channel of the Nile was more than ordinarily tortuous; or whether, as I suspect, the fears of our Arabs prompted them to seek a safer channel in mid-river when the true course was under the eastern shore, certain it is that just about sunset we ran hard and fast upon a sandbank, from which all the efforts of our men failed to dislodge us that night, and it was not till we had spent ten

hours in that uncomfortable position, that next morning, by means of warping with an anchor cast at right angles up the stream, we were afloat once more, and away upon our course. We had by this time in our voyage down from Wady Halfeh been pretty familiar with sandbanks, and the grating sound of our flat bottom as it went with a thud upon a bank, was an every-day though always most disagreeable sound to our ears; but in this instance it was peculiarly inopportune and unpleasant; we were in the very midst of the disturbed district; and had the rebels been lurking near, and wished to attack us, we were now throughout the night a helpless log upon the waters, and an easy prey to the foe. In shallow water, in the middle of the river, we were cut off from all assistance and none could come to the rescue, happen what might; and when, looking out at midnight on the moonlit scene, and encouraging our sailors (who for the tenth time had pulled off their robes and turbans, and plunged into the water) to renew their efforts to push off the boat, we beheld no less than four native cangias, two on either side, apparently bearing down upon us, and surrounding us, we began to think that things looked awkward, and that the hour of our attack was at hand.

However it turned out, that like the tame duck in the decoy, we had unwittingly, and I am sure, quite unintentionally, lured other unhappy and quite innocent boats upon the bank; for seeing us as they supposed in the channel, they followed in the course we had chosen, and shared in our misfortune; not however for long; they were all comparatively lightly laden, and small, and were soon afloat again; and we were glad enough to see them one by one float away down the stream.

Next morning we too were released; and with the khamseen behind us, sped along past Gow el Kebeer, where the disturbances had been at their height. Here we saw the Pasha's troops encamped; lines of white tents on the river-bank; officers with runners behind them cantering over the plain; camels picketed; and though several villages still stood, no inhabitant seemed there; the whole plain of Gow looked deserted and bare. Presently we passed a small village, whose ruined and blackened walls and charred palm-trees told that it had been one of the denounced, and had been fired by the Pasha; while here and there a peasant, stalking with his long gun among the ruins, seemed to be searching among the débris of his home, and looked suspiciously at us as we

passed by. But a more ominous sight than all, were the vast flocks of vultures which crowded on the shore. There was the great griffon vulture (*Vultur aureus*) and the neophron (*Neophron percnopterus*) commonly called by the Arabs 'Pharaoh's hen,' which to the number of above a hundred in a single flock, sat gorged and sleepy, and suggested most repulsive thoughts of the human prey which had attracted them there; even then some were tearing away at a carcase as it floated down the stream. Dogs too were there in unwonted numbers, without masters, sleeping away their cares on the hot sand. And as we sailed on from that horrible spot, all the banks of the river seemed deserted, which had been so cheerful with men's voices as we ascended the river two months before. The whole manner too of those we did meet was changed towards us; instead of the courteous greeting and kindly interchange of civility which marked our upward progress, we now encountered only angry looks and vindictive speeches; it was now a deep anathema on Christian dogs, a savage sneer, a muttered curse, or an open threat which was screamed at us from the bank or from the passing boat. Forbidding our Arab sailors to reply, we were glad to be sailing away from that

unfriendly district, with a freshening breeze behind us; and were not sorry before nightfall to have passed the rebels' stronghold, and to anchor for the night under the protecting walls of Sioot.

This account of the insurrection would be incomplete if I did not add that the vengeance taken by the Pasha on the district which harboured the insurgents was not satisfied, until from sixteen hundred to two thousand lives had been sacrificed as a penalty for the crime of rebellion, and a wholesome warning to survivors. These figures I quote from Lady Duff Gordon, than whom I do not know any one more likely to have received correct information, both from her intimacy with people of every grade, and from her family connections with some in high office in Alexandria.

CHAPTER VII.

CAUSES OF THE INSURRECTION.

IN the last chapter I recorded the facts of the very formidable rebellion which blazed out in Egypt in the months of February and March 1865, as they unfolded themselves to our own senses, when we passed through the disturbed district. I propose now to relate its origin, and such particulars as we were able to glean from the several governors of the larger towns in Upper Egypt, upon all of whom we made a point of calling; with a view of ascertaining in the first place the amount of risk we incurred in continuing our journey down the river, and also of learning the details of the rebellion, which had become of such absorbing interest to us. Some of the governors, it is true, would give us little or no information, or what they did volunteer we found it necessary to disbelieve altogether; so that after consuming much precious time over those two essential preliminaries to

every enquiry in the East, the inevitable pipes and coffee, which sorely try the patience of those who are in a hurry; and after exchanging unmeaning compliments, which, as a mere matter of routine, cease to be civilities, we were fain to take leave completely baffled in our enquiries, and with a full conviction that we were being imposed upon by the crafty officials, so far at least as those can be said to be dupes whose eyes are wide open to the deceit intended to be practised upon them. But this was by no means universally the case; several of the governors evidently told us frankly all they knew, counselled us how to proceed, and on one occasion even invited us to visit the scene of destruction, where several villages had been razed to the ground, making no mystery before us of the whole disaster, nor hesitating to impart to us an account of the summary punishment which had been inflicted on the insurgents.

I am the more disposed to enter somewhat minutely into these details, because little was ever heard of this insurrection, not only in Europe, but even in the capital of Egypt itself; and yet the disturbance was not a trifling one; it was no petty *émeute*, scarcely worth observation, which might be left to the local authorities to crush; but it

was deeply rooted in the fanaticism of zealous Muslims, and in the misery and indignation of a cruelly oppressed and starving people; and no sooner was the torch of rebellion held aloft, than it enlisted the cordial support of thousands of fellaheen on either bank of the Nile in that immediate district; and was beginning to spread like wildfire through the land, when the very prompt and severe measures of the Pasha literally 'stamped it out,' and extinguished the flame, though I strongly suspect the embers are still smouldering beneath the surface, one day to burst forth again with renewed vigour.

But who in Europe has ever heard any particulars of this rebellion? what beyond a vague report of certain disturbances has ever reached the European ear? Why even in Cairo, the real facts of the case, and the extent of the insurrection, were wholly unknown to the people; and it was with intense earnestness for information that we were questioned on all sides on our arrival in the capital, when it was known that we had just passed through the insurgents' country. Rumours enough undoubtedly were rife on all hands; rumours so extravagant, so exaggerated, as only the Eastern newsmonger can embellish; but these complicated

the mystery, so that no one knew what to believe; and while some gave a willing ear to the most incredible versions, others treated the whole matter as a trumped-up story; and so every man, according to his idiosyncrasy, believed just what he liked.

I pause here for a moment to contrast the accuracy and rapidity with which information on all matters is disseminated in this country through the length and breadth of the land; and with what marvellous celerity every trifling detail of public interest is made known in every household throughout Great Britain, by means of the electric telegraph and the daily papers, let the accounts of the various outbreaks of the Fenian conspiracy suffice to show; but in Egypt there is literally no means of gaining reliable intelligence on any subject whatever. Prevarication, dissembling, concealment of truth, are so deeply engraved in the heart of the Arab, that it is impossible to take his word on the veriest trifle, even where no conceivable object can be gained by concealing the truth. Added to this, his national love of making a good story, and recounting it, with ever-increasing marvels, to a gaping crowd of eager listeners, leads him to draw largely on a fertile invention, and to eke out the interest of his tale by embel-

lishments not by any means founded on fact. But as a climax to the causes producing general misinformation, more especially with regard to such matters as a serious rebellion in his dominions, the paternal, not to say despotic, government of the Pasha sealed the lips of its officers, and took pains to prevent such dangerous intelligence being disseminated among his subjects, and perchance infecting them with a like epidemic. And so the result was that at Cairo and Alexandria a profound ignorance generally prevailed of what was indeed a most critical rebellion.

I proceed then to piece together all the scraps of reliable information as to the origin of the insurrection, which we gleaned from one quarter and another; from Thebes, from Keneh, from Farshoot, from Girghey, from Souhag, from Gow el Kebeer, supplemented and controlled as it afterwards was, by information we obtained from the best authority at Cairo and Alexandria; and I am convinced that at last we worked out the matter to the bottom, and were enabled to separate from the many unfounded rumours with which it was soon mixed up, the real story as it occurred.

I believe that at the very bottom of this rebellion, ruin and starvation were its first and most

powerful advocates. Owing to a combination of circumstances, but chiefly to the destructive cattle plague of the previous year, the destitution of the fellaheen had been very great; for the cattle epidemic had been no common visitation, and its effects were truly appalling; and this even to a country in a manner accustomed to such fearful scourges. Lepsius describes the murrain of 1842 as of almost unprecedented violence, when it swept off 40,000 head of cattle; but now we were credibly informed that of the whole of the cattle in Egypt, 98 per cent. had died; and our good friend Lady Duff Gordon assured us, that at Luxor she had, day after day, seen a hundred carcases float down the river. Moreover, though a whole year had elapsed, and a small supply had been imported, we very rarely saw any cattle at all. Now such a wholesale sweep of horned beasts in Egypt implies not only the loss to a needy people of an important portion of their wealth, with which, for its intrinsic value, they could very ill afford to part; but at the same time implies the still more alarming fact, that a great portion of the *sakias*, or water-wheels used for irrigating the land, must be thrown out of use. I have already shown that these *sakias* are turned by oxen, and it

will be remembered that by means of a succession of earthen pots attached to a broad thong, they pour forth a considerable and continuous stream of water, which is conducted in channels over the land requiring to be irrigated. Now it is well known that unless the soil is thus watered it becomes burnt into a hardened mass, and is wholly unproductive; whereas when moistened from time to time with Nile water, it produces the most luxuriant crops. No water, no crop, is the very certain consequence in Egypt. 'Point d'argent, point de Suisses,' cannot be more conclusive. But now the cattle were dead, and the *sakias* must stand idle; and though the men and boys worked incessantly with the *shadoof*, or leathern bucket attached to a pole, which they swung and emptied with most praiseworthy perseverance, yet this process, laborious though it was, could irrigate but a very small portion; and the consequence was, that whole tracts of country, hitherto under cultivation, were necessarily abandoned to the ever-encroaching sand of the desert, and left in unprofitable neglect. Then again, there were no oxen to draw the primitive ploughs; and though here and there might be seen an attempt to substitute other cattle, it was even more sad than ridiculous to see

such an ill-assorted pair as the tall gaunt camel yoked with the diminutive donkey, trying to supply the place of a more orthodox team. The inevitable consequence then, arising from the cattle epidemic, was that a very large proportion of the land was thrown out of cultivation, and famine, or at any rate extreme scarcity, was the result.

Again, another fertile source of dissatisfaction, and which was continually exciting indignation against the government, was the system of tenure of land by the fellaheen. As the whole country belonged virtually to the Pasha, occupation of land was always precarious; and the so-called owner was liable to be turned out of his hereditary possessions without notice, at the caprice of an unscrupulous autocrat. Not unfrequently this occasioned enormous hardships, and when peremptorily ordered to remove from his property to which he had become attached, and which he had probably improved, to another less eligible spot, without any reason assigned for the order beyond the will of the Pasha (who probably thus rewarded some favourite, or gratified some flattering courtier), can we wonder that the ousted proprietor felt indignant at such treatment, or that he was prepared, when opportunity should arise, to rebel against such flagrant

tyranny? Is it a marvel that the ruler of Egypt is regarded by his subjects as a hated tyrant, an oppressor, and a bitter enemy? Is it strange that the Arab mutters with clenched teeth and in bitter hatred the proverb he learnt from his fathers, that 'grass never grows in the footsteps of a Turk'?

But of all the sources of general dissatisfaction with the government, that which naturally created most violent opposition, and raised the loudest outcry was the abominable system of forced labour; which, notwithstanding all declarations and promises to the contrary on the part of the Pasha, is still practised to a great extent in Egypt. We had heard that this worst kind of slavery had been abolished; but we were soon undeceived, and had been eye-witnesses to the fact that it exists in the most cruel form, and on a very large scale; as I detailed in a former page, when speaking of our visit to Sioot. And whatever M. St.-Hilaire may say of the necessity of such corvée or compulsory labour, and the alternative of leaving public works unaccomplished, unless such external force compelled the fellaheen to work against their will, few Englishmen, I think, will be inclined to endorse his opinion, or refuse their sympathy to the poor labourers, who torn from their homes and families

are hurried off to work under the lash; while M. St.-Hilaire, interested though he naturally is in the accomplishment of the great ship canal, and looking upon the matter with the eyes of a Frenchman, to whom the somewhat similar conscription for soldiers is familiar, owns that 'the labour is generally great, and the wages small.' But far more telling than any arguments of the barbarity of such compulsory labour, and the very natural horror of the workmen for such employment, stands out the undeniable fact, that when the great Mahmoudieh Canal was made by Mohammed Ali, no less than ten thousand fellaheen, at the lowest computation (some say twenty thousand), perished under the rigour of that compulsory work, and the starvation and hardships against which they had no means of providing—a wholesale and perfectly gratuitous destruction of human life, which the unjustifiable impatience of the tyrant, and his determination to complete the great work within a twelvemonth, mainly caused; and which may well be compared with a like iniquity of early times; when, (as Herodotus informs us,) in the reign of Necos, a canal was made from the Nile to the Red Sea, and one hundred and twenty thousand Egyptians perished in the excavation; more especially

when we consider that the figures of the historian, derived from hearsay, are doubtless greatly exaggerated. There is then precedent enough, in modern, as well as ancient times, to give the inhabitants of Egypt a detestation of all compulsory work, and need I say that here again was a most fruitful source of exasperation against the government, and an intense longing for revenge.

This, then, was how matters stood in Egypt when the Fast of Ramadan came to an end on February 26th. Now the close of the Fast of Ramadan has so often ushered in disturbances on the part of fanatical Muslims, whose religious *furor* seems to have generally worked itself up to fever heat at that time, that extra vigilance is annually enjoined, and extra precautions adopted, to prevent any collision with the Copts. Add to this, the preparations for the Mecca pilgrimage now making on all hands; files of camels picketed on the bank ready for the start; hundreds of pilgrims crowding the boats on the river, the women chanting the *zaghareet*, or melancholy pilgrim wail of joy, as they float along; hundreds more encamped on the bank; and all this excitement over the departure of the Haj is another most fertile source of fanatic tumult, and is annually looked forward to with considerable

alarm by the authorities near the various points of muster on the river bank.

Thus various circumstances and the fitting moment when fanatical frenzy was at its height, combined to make the Arabs of Egypt ripe for revolt. There wanted but the smallest spark to kindle the flame, and the torch of insurrection would blaze out on every hand; nor was that spark wanting. A certain Copt, who, though contrary to law, possessed a Muslim slave, tried to convert her to Christianity: upon this, she fled from him to the *Sheikh el Beled*, or head of the village, and complained of his proselytizing views. That sheikh could not take upon himself to settle so grave a question, and so he at once communicated with a famous saint in that neighbourhood, the sheikh of another village, whose name, notorious afterwards for violence and murder, was Achmet *el taib*, or 'the good.' Now it chanced that this excellent Achmet was kinsman to the fanatic who at the period of the mutiny in India contrived to make his name memorable by preaching a holy war to the Muslims, and enraging them against the Christians by the pretext of greased cartridges and other plausible devices. But before he left Egypt on his sacred errand in India, he solemnly

charged his kinsman to carry on the holy war, in case of his death; and with him he left his mantle, and his parting injunction to attack the Christians at every opportunity. Here then was his occasion: with a people oppressed by a tyrannical government; ground down with ill-usage, and half famished; with all their deepest religious feelings excited in favour of the Crescent and against the Cross, by the close of the Fast of Ramadan and the immediate departure of the pilgrims for Mecca; with the glaring case of the proselytizing Copt as the immediate *casus belli*, what more could he desire? At once he arrayed himself and his followers for a systematic attack on the hated Copts; quickly he passed from village to village, collecting multitudes of adherents wherever he went. As the false prophet's cry had been, 'Death or the Koran,' so now this fanatic allowed but one alternative, 'Death or rebellion.' Nobody should stand aloof, every Christian must be exterminated, every Muslim must join in the war of extermination; such was his immediate resolve, which he began without loss of time to carry out.

And even in that thinly-peopled district, his forces rapidly increased. Five thousand men flocked to his command; and already the work of burning

villages, of massacring the Christians, and of pillaging their houses, was in full swing, when (as I pointed out before) the Pasha with astonishing rapidity appeared upon the scene of action, dispersed the rebels, and took summary vengeance on the insurgents.

Achmet el Taib was caught and hung, but though his body was left on the tree for days to convince his followers that he was dead, they still held that he could not die, and that he had escaped; and even our boatmen told us marvellous tales which they evidently implicitly believed, that once before in a similar attack upon the Christians, he had been thrown into a well, but the water immediately rose to the well's mouth, and floated the saint, so that he miraculously escaped; and though on another occasion he was blown from a gun, even that rough treatment had no effect upon him, and he took no harm; and so Egypt will hear another day of the future exploits of this most exemplary character. But having once seen something of an insurrection in Egypt, I am by no means ambitious to see another; so I trust when Achmet el Taib makes his next escapade against the Christians, I may not be there to see.

CHAPTER VIII.

SIOOT TO CAIRO AND ALEXANDRIA.

We were now beyond the rebels' country, and henceforth our course was free from disturbance and alarm. At the same time we were cautious of going on shore singly, and we were still subject to insulting speeches called out from the bank, and from the boats loaded with pilgrims which yet thronged the river; who thus gave evidence that their fanatical rancour against the Christians, though suppressed by the strong arm of the Pasha, was not extinguished, but only smouldering in their breasts.

Our journey from Sioot to Cairo was remarkable for the succession of head winds which again beset us, and which prolonged our trip far beyond the time we had allotted to it; many were the hours, sometimes whole days, which we passed at anchor, moored beneath some sheltering bank, awaiting the change of an adverse gale; many again were

the hours we passed on sandbanks, which in some places seemed to stretch a huge barrier all across the river's channel. But we had learnt on such occasions to betake ourselves to the sandal, and with a couple of men to row us to the various objects of interest which we wished to visit, we stole a march on the heavy dahabeah, and had either seen the sights, and were ready to go on board when the flag of that vessel came in view; or we let her drift on with the current before us, well assured that we could afford to give her several hours' start, and overtake her in the light gig, which two men could pull down the stream at a famous pace. The rock tombs of Dayr el Nackel were the objects of the first expedition which we made in this way after leaving Sioot. It was a long and weary tramp over the deep sands of the desert to the foot of the rocks in which these remarkable tombs lay; but when we reached them, though almost overpowered by the excessive heat, we were amply repaid for our labour. A great number of these caverns had served as dwellings in life to the early Christians, and as tombs after life; and in truth dwellings and tombs were so mingled together that it was sometimes difficult to distinguish them. Other larger

caverns had served as churches, and many very rude paintings of saints and crosses decorated the walls. Some of these bore marks of very great antiquity, but others had been scrawled in modern days by the Copts. We spent several hours in scrambling over the rocks, and up and down the ravines, exploring these innumerable and most interesting abodes of the Christians who retired here in the earliest ages of the Church; and we halted for a long time in one which exceeded all the others in size, and penetrated the mountain to a considerable distance, while pillars of living rock supported the roof; and the sides were hewn after the manner of the ancient quarries. It bore every appearance of having been devoted to Christian worship in some very distant age, and we could well imagine how those who had retired either from choice as preferring the lives of anchorites, or from persecution, congregated here for worship; when the African Church was foremost in zeal; and numbers had fled to such retirement as the desert offered, where they could pass their lives in contemplation and prayer, away from the distraction of cities and camps, and safe from the persecution of heathen rulers. These were the only specimens of the early Christian

haunts which we had seen, but doubtless if they were thoroughly explored, many of the rocks which bound the desert on either bank of the Nile would be found to contain similar memorials of occupation; for we are told that multitudes flocked to Egypt in the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era, to seek that privacy and separation from the world which the cliffs and quarries overhanging the valley of the Nile were eminently calculated to offer.

In Egypt indeed monasticism first flourished; and in the caverns of its deserts the earliest eremites established their cells; and though Gibbon, with his customary bitterness against the Church, would insinuate that it was only 'as the fruitful parent of superstition that Egypt afforded the first examples of monastic life,' the more unprejudiced will recollect that the rocky fastnesses of the Nile, so admirably contrived by nature for the purpose, sheltered saints and martyrs and confessors and other holy men, with the ascetic Antony, and occasionally the dauntless Athanasius, at their head. They will see in those rude caverns the hallowed abodes of the faithful, who in a lawless and wicked age retired here from the world, where they could pass their lives in meditation and

prayer, and in the practice of self-denial and mortification of the flesh; and they will honour the hardy anchorites who for conscience' sake endured the privations which these desolate rocks must have entailed. The numbers of hermits who at one time thronged wherever the caverns of the desert offered suitable spots for retirement, must have been prodigious. They established themselves in the ancient tombs; they converted the deserted dwellings of the dead into troglodyte habitations; and excavations of all sorts, whether for private or sacred purposes, were appropriated for their cells; and though we may hesitate to accept the exaggerated statement of Gibbon with regard to their numbers, we may well believe that the recluses who dwelt on the banks of the Nile and in the rocks which bound it, were in the fifth and following centuries many thousands in number.

At the distance of a mile or two from these Christian remains, and after some hours' ineffectual search, we came upon the tomb of a grandee, containing a representation of the transport of a colossal figure on a sledge. This figure is no less than twenty-two feet in height, and the sledge on which it stands is towed by a vast number of workmen who are harnessed to it with ropes. It is of

the period of Osirtasen I., as far back as the twenty-first century before our era, and was discovered by those early pioneers of Egyptian antiquities, Captains Irby and Mangles, and special attention has been called to it by Sir Gardner Wilkinson. To myself personally, this subject was of the greatest interest, inasmuch as the much-vexed question of the method employed in conveying the large stones to our British temples in Wiltshire, Avebury and Stonehenge, had often come before me, and I was curious to see the process employed by a cotemporary, if not an earlier people, and as depicted by themselves. The story is admirably told in that painting, and has been fully explained in the Handbook, so that I need not detail the particulars. I may add, however, that I wasted a great deal of time and took great pains in making an accurate coloured sketch of this interesting subject, and congratulated myself the more on my achievement, as the tomb has in great part fallen in, and the pictures are rapidly going to decay; and then, when I came home, to my chagrin I found that my pains had all been thrown away, for Sir Gardner Wilkinson, who has exhausted the antiquities of Egypt, had already published a faithful copy of

this painting, which may be seen in the second volume of Rawlinson's Herodotus, as well as in the third volume of the 'Ancient Egyptians.' Whilst upon this subject I may also add that a bas-relief, bearing a similar representation of the transport by the Assyrians of a colossal human-headed bull from the quarry to the palace, and effected by very much the same means, has been discovered by Mr. Layard at Koyunjik, as may be seen in the spirited illustration at the end of the first volume of Professor Rawlinson's 'Ancient Monarchies,' so that we have ample evidence to prove that the more civilised nations of antiquity did convey the enormous masses of stone and granite, which we find *somehow* transported from the quarries to the temples, by the sheer force of numbers, aided only by such simple mechanical contrivances as the roller, the lever, and the wedge.*

As we chanced to come opposite these interesting tombs in the early morning, we left the

* This subject has been more fully discussed by me in a paper read before the Wiltshire Archæological and Natural History Society during their annual meeting at Salisbury in 1865, entitled, 'On the method of moving colossal stones as practised by some of the more advanced nations of antiquity,' and published in the *Wiltshire Magazine*, x. 52–60.

dahabeah soon after sunrise and ordered her to float down the river until we overtook her, but we had been so much interested, first in the Christian remains, and then in the last-described tomb of the Colossus, that the afternoon was far-advanced when we rejoined the sandal; and it was not until after three hours' hard rowing, and when nearly famished with hunger, that we reached, long after sunset, the hospitable saloon of the 'Southern Cross.' We were then very near the grottoes of Beni Hassan, opposite to which we lay at anchor all night.

We were again on shore soon after daybreak, and we spent many hours in the famous tombs of Beni Hassan, which are of the earliest date. No words can exaggerate the interest, and nothing can exceed the vivid insight into early Egyptian domestic life given by the admirable paintings with which the walls of some of these tombs are covered. I do not think that I have hitherto observed, with regard to these wall paintings, that they are not depicted upon the actual rock itself, which would offer too coarse a face, and absorb too much paint; but that the walls are previously prepared by being covered with a thin coat of lime, or a calcareous composition of some sort,

presenting a smooth and even surface to the artist. Here we do not find, as in some other cases, one subject harped upon throughout, one design copied and hackneyed, and repeated till we know it by heart; but there is great variety of subject as well as of treatment. There are scenes of amusement and recreation, scenes of labour and trade, scenes of fowling and fishing; in short, the walls of Beni Hassan give a very fair insight into the habits and occupations of Egyptians of four thousand years ago. Even without going beyond these tombs, here one might learn the whole process of glass-blowing, as adopted in that remote age in the valley of the Nile. In like manner one might study here how the carpenter carried on his work, with what tools, and in what fashion he pursued his calling. How again grapes were brought to the wine press, and the whole art of wine-making displayed. Passing on from these descriptive scenes of various trades, we see that wrestling formed a very favourite recreation amongst the male, and tossing the ball amongst the female population. Of the latter there were many groups; and the easy attitudes of the players as well as the more violent contortions of the wrestlers, amply proved the skill of the artist, who delineated

such active scenes with so much spirit and character. I will not attempt to touch upon the many other tableaux depicted on these walls, or the various animals and birds which are brought in by attendants, either as tribute or as presents, and many of them clearly the same species as we find in the Nile valley now. But I may observe that one scene represents the punishment of some unfortunate delinquents by beating with a stick on the soles of the feet, proof positive that the bastinado of modern date is of immense antiquity. There is one group of figures, evidently foreigners, accompanied with asses, which once enjoyed the distinguished honour of being entitled by Egyptologists, the going down of Joseph's brethren to buy corn; but though that charming idea has been dissipated by the deliberate verdict of Sir Gardner Wilkinson, the procession or cavalcade, to whomsoever it may belong, represents a body of men on a journey, some centuries earlier than the period when Joseph was chief officer under Pharaoh, and cannot therefore but command the attention of the traveller who here sees Asiatics of the date of about B.C. 2000, represented as foreigners in Egypt.

But I must take my leave of Beni Hassan, though its incomparable treasures tempt me to

prolong my story, and to linger over those most ancient of pictures, of such absorbing interest to the archæologist, and in such wonderful preservation. As soon as we gained the dahabeah, we sped along at a famous rate before a khamseen wind, which coming from the desert with the blast of a furnace, drove us before it at the rate of six miles an hour. We grudged every moment's loss of such a favourable breeze, and only halted one hour at Minieh to enable Braheem to replenish his stores; and during the twenty-four hours from sunset that evening to sunset the following day, we had accomplished no less than eighty-six miles. Then the wind lulled, and a calm ensued, which was very soon exchanged for a tremendous hurricane from the north, which kept us prisoners under the bank, with very little change of quarters, for nearly three days. This was a fair sample of the strange variations of pace in Nile travelling; for we were one day scudding before the gale at a spanking rate, then for days moored to the bank in helpless inaction, while head winds prevailed; so that it is impossible to make any calculation approaching to accuracy, as to the time required for any given trip. But such a north wind as now beset us we had never yet expe-

rienced; native boats, bound up the river, even large and heavily laden with merchandise, as well as lighter craft, flew before the wind, though against the current,* with bare poles only, and without exposing a vestige of sail. On the third morning of this summary detention, when within five miles of Memphis, we took to the sandal, and accompanied by Braheem and two of our stoutest sailors, tried to force our way against the wind with oars; but finding that wholly impracticable, our men harnessed themselves to a rope, and tracked from the shore, while Braheem and I kept the boat straight with poles; and thus in something under three hours, after a hard battle with the big waves, we reached the village of Sakkara. Here we procured donkeys, and rode to the ruins of Memphis, which however interesting as having once belonged to that famous city, consist of little more than fragments of columns and statues, and a fractured colossus. Besides these, vast heaps of rubbish, earth, bricks, and broken pottery, cover-

* As this statement has been called in question since my return to England by some who cannot imagine such a force of wind, and suspect that I have made some mistake in the matter, I am glad to adduce the corroborative testimony to the fact of Belzoni, *Travels in Egypt and Nubia*, p. 33; and Mr. Bayard Taylor, *Landscapes from Egypt*, pp. 329, 448.

ing an extensive area, are the only vestiges to mark the site of the ancient capital of Egypt.

This is not a little disappointing; for as the traveller rides along the raised embankments towards the city, he remembers that it was here the several Pharaohs held their court, to which Abraham came when he went down into Egypt, and was hospitably entertained by the monarch; and again where Joseph ingratiated himself in the eyes of his sovereign, and became ruler over the land; and also where Moses was born, and brought up, in the royal palace, and learned all the wisdom of the Egyptians; where he brought the plagues on the obstinate king, and whence he started on his journey through the desert.

Here too Thales and Solon, and Hecatæus and Herodotus came to wonder at arts and sciences and learning and civilisation, to which all other nations were in comparison strangers, and to learn philosophy and history at the great fountain-head of knowledge. And here the ungovernable temper of Cambyses led that haughty monarch to stab the sacred Apis, and by mortally wounding their venerated deity, drew upon himself the implacable hatred of the Egyptian people.

But Memphis, however great in those days (and

that it was an immense city the extent of the mounds of rubbish amply prove), is now completely swept away, and leaves not a single monument to attest its former grandeur, unless it be in its magnificent necropolis, which stretching forth for many miles along the raised edge of the desert, contains, as Lepsius assures us, no less than sixty-nine pyramids, overlooking the grand capital, including those of Sakkara, Dashoor, and Ghizeh, colossal sepulchres, which alone survive the destruction of the mighty city to which they belonged.

And now leaving the mounds of Memphis, said with good reason to be the most venerable spot on the earth, a short ride of a couple of miles through a palm-forest and a wide and rich plain, brought us to the old village of Sakkara. *Coasting* along the edge of the desert (for to all practical purposes the desert, as I before said, answers to the sea), we reached in another mile the great pyramid of Sakkara, called also that of Abooseir. It is built in five stages, each stage, at a rough estimate, some twenty-two or twenty-four feet in height; it is very much dilapidated, but though of considerable height, and of fair proportions, of which we thoroughly convinced ourselves by undertaking to

walk round it, it is very diminutive when compared with its gigantic brethren of Ghizeh. In the immediate neighbourhood stands another but a very small one; and from hence we could take in all the pyramids at a single glance. On our left rose the two of Dashoor; on our right the three of Ghizeh, and before us stood the two of Sakkara.

Then we rode on to the 'Mummy Pits of Apis,' as they are called. All over this district gangs of workmen are now employed with the shovel and the pick in searching for hidden antiquities, under the direction of M. Mariette; but wherever we came upon a party thus occupied, there was always a superintendent close at hand, watching their proceedings; for your Egyptian Arab has a propensity for appropriating what he thinks worth purloining, and has but indistinct notions of the possessive pronouns *meum* and *teum*.

Arrived at the entrance to the Apis cemetery, we passed through an arched doorway into a vast corridor cut in the living rock. Traversing this and many other such passages, running straight for perhaps a hundred yards, we seemed to be in some extensive wine vault, with ample space above our heads, as well as on either side; the

corridors being from ten to twelve feet high, and from eight to ten wide. Instead of wine bins right and left in this seeming cellar, we came at intervals to large chambers cut in the rock, and each such recess or chamber contained a sarcophagus, in which a sacred and embalmed bull had been deposited after death. These sarcophagi were of enormous size, exceedingly massive, and each of one single block of granite hollowed out. By rough measurement, I found that they were on an average (for they differed slightly in size) about thirteen feet long, seven broad, and six high. The solid granite sides were sometimes two feet in thickness, and the weight of each block must have been enormous. Then again rose up the puzzling question, which seemed to haunt us in Egypt like an evil dream, How were these vast masses transported from the quarries, and moved along the passage into these chambers? At all events it puzzles M. Mariette to move them now; for having with much difficulty succeeded in bringing one near the entrance of the long corridor, there it has stuck fast, immoveable so far as present means of propelling it farther extend. The greater part of these sarcophagi are of black granite, and highly polished, but one of the

finest is of red granite. Some few are adorned with hieroglyphics, though in general they bear no characters or inscriptions on their polished sides. Each is furnished with a massive cover of the same material, with the edges rounded off, and of great thickness; and these covers are now slid along the top a few feet, to allow visitors to peep within, and marvel at the immense receptacle provided for the sacred bull, thus honoured in death, as he had been in life. There are twenty-four of these enormous sarcophagi in their respective chambers, and they are certainly quite in character with the many other colossal works in which the ancient Egyptian mind delighted.

From these curious and unique mummy pits we rode on to the Serapeum, a very beautiful temple which had for ages been completely buried in sand, and had only within the last two years been opened to light by the indefatigable M. Mariette. In general arrangement it bore no likeness to any temple we had seen; the columns were merely plain square pillars, without capital or base; but these, with the walls, were most highly decorated with sculpture, painting, and coloured bas-reliefs, very slightly raised above the surface. The colours were as vivid as if they had been just laid on; far

more so than in any temple or tomb we had visited elsewhere, which I suppose may be attributed to the little exposure to the atmosphere they had suffered, having been probably for many centuries buried in the fine dry sand of the desert;- but the paintings also betokened a much higher standard of artistic skill than we had met with; the drawing, the proportions, the arrangement, and the colouring combining to show that he was no common decorator whose handiwork we now looked upon. Amidst a multitude of birds and animals of various kinds, and of trades depicted, much as in the grottoes of Beni Hassan, there was the Nile, filled with fish of many species, of quaint but very characteristic form: there were two crocodiles admirably represented; and two hippopotami, one of which was being speared by a hunter, and had turned his head towards the foe with open jaws, displaying a most formidable array of teeth. On the whole we pronounced the decorations of this temple quite as interesting in subject, far better drawn, and in immeasurably better preservation than those at Beni Hassan, which have been so universally and so deservedly extolled; and doubtless when this temple has become better known to Egyptologists, it will attract the attention it

deserves, and be visited by every traveller; to which its proximity to Cairo will very much conduce.

We could not tear ourselves away from these interesting relics till near sunset; and though our excellent donkeys shuffled back to Sakkara in less than two hours, it was quite dark long before we reached the river; and then the wind was blowing such a furious gale that our boatmen declared it was impossible to return up the river that evening in the sandal, and calmly suggested that we should lie down on the bank all night, and try to rejoin the dahabeah at daybreak. Of course we loudly demurred to any such unpleasant arrangement, but as Braheem sided with the Arabs in exaggerating the dangers of a boat voyage on so dark and stormy a night, we were obliged to cast about for some other plan of transporting ourselves to the good ship where our supper and bed awaited us. At length, after wandering for an hour up and down the river bank, we descried a native *murkab* at anchor; and after another hour's delay in sending for the reis and the boatmen who composed its crew, and offering them half a napoleon to convey us up the river, we set sail in the midst of a furious tempest; but it was not till after an

uncomfortable voyage of two hours, while we crouched at the bottom of that merchant vessel, trying to escape the cutting wind which seemed to freeze our bones with the unaccustomed cold, that at midnight we sprang joyfully on to the deck of the 'Southern Cross,' and soon forgot the cold, hunger, and fatigue which had almost overpowered us.

When we went on deck the following morning, we found the wind somewhat abated, and we had floated down some five or six miles; and already the minarets of Cairo were in sight, though at ten miles' distance. For some hours we patiently endured floating in the current, which means turning round and round, and so making two hundred yards per hour; at length our anxiety for home letters overcame the stoical resignation to delay which we had almost learned to practise, and we could stand this crawling no longer; so taking leave of the 'Southern Cross' and her crew, and leaving all our baggage to follow us at leisure, for the last time we entered the sandal, and in due course were landed at Old Cairo, where we procured donkeys, and made the best of our way to the home of the Englishman in Egypt, the world-renowned Shepheard's Hotel, from which we

had started on our boat-voyage, exactly three months before.

A large budget of letters and a file of newspapers awaited us at Cairo, and it seemed strange to return once more to civilised life, and to sleep within four walls. Then we had to settle with Braheem, paying him the balance we owed (which amounted to some 160*l.*) in sovereigns, which were counted out and laid in little heaps after true Oriental fashion. And now we began to make preparations for our tour in Syria and the Holy Land, sending off our heavy goods and the spoil of the Egyptians which we had amassed, direct to England; and retaining only such light baggage as could accompany us on mules in the riding tour we contemplated, and then with the help of Braheem, who assisted us to the last, we passed through the intricacies of the railway station, and journeyed back to Alexandria; but the birds which had so charmed me in my outward passage, were no novelties now to my more practised eye, and I scarcely cared to turn my head towards the window, for with the objects which might be viewed therefrom, I had become thoroughly familiar; and so at Alexandria, where on arrival everything kept us transfixed in amazement and delight from

the novelty of the scene, now all seemed commonplace and trivial, so much are we the creatures of habit, and so soon do our eyes become accustomed to that which is presented before them day after day.

We found the Peninsular and Oriental Hotel very superior to the Hôtel de l'Europe, where we had previously quartered ourselves; and indeed during some days which we were forced to spend in Alexandria, both now in awaiting a vessel to take us to Jaffa, and subsequently on our return from the Holy Land, on our way home, our wants were all supplied, and we were made very comfortable, by the attentive manager and his subordinates at this immense establishment.

CHAPTER IX.

REFLECTIONS ON EGYPTIAN TOUR.

I HAVE now brought my Egyptian travels to a close, and conducted the reader back to the port of Alexandria from whence we set out on our Eastern journey. It remains only that I should gather up the unconnected threads which lie scattered over the previous chapters, and weave from these premises the conclusions which I think will naturally follow from a retrospect of the whole tour.

And I make bold to assert as my most decided conviction, that of all the countries which I have ever visited, Egypt bears away the palm, not only in regard to the grand monuments of antiquity and the many other objects of attraction which it offers, but in regard to the novel and delightful, howbeit expensive, mode of travel in vogue ; to the thorough independence of the life in a Nile boat, to the magnificence of the climate, and the pleasant

associations with which Eastern lands are invested. I say this deliberately and unhesitatingly, because I feel enthusiastic on the subject; but I deny that I am a blind partisan, for I have not hesitated to place prominently before the reader all the drawbacks and *désagréments* with some of which this, as well as every other tour, must of course be accompanied. But though all is not at all times *couleur de rose*, the bright side of the picture is so brilliant, as almost to banish from view the duller portions, which indeed are but few in number, and of very little account. Now, in the foregoing chapters I have not been able to be lavish in praise when describing the navigation of the Nile by the Arab boatmen; and yet I would not have anyone suppose on that account that the interest and enjoyment of the voyage are materially lessened by the constant laziness and provoking want of energy in the crew, and the ever-recurring and often violent altercations which take place in consequence. These things are so well understood beforehand, and are so much a matter of course in the East, that they create no real annoyance, nor ever take one by surprise. They are part of the inevitable accompaniments of all Oriental travel; and just as a dispute with a London cabman used to be the

universal consequence of hiring a cab; but yet never proved a serious drawback when business or pleasure led one to employ his services, so it is with the Arab sailor; nor does any reasonable man feel disposed to quarrel with that which he was prepared from the beginning to expect as a part of the universal system practised in those countries. I will further observe that disinclined as the native Egyptian is to unwonted toil, and repugnant as he is to all innovations of every kind, he does after his own prescribed method, and on what he considers orthodox occasions, undergo a considerable amount of very severe bodily labour; thus though he prefers to lie snugly moored under a bank for days when a slight head wind gives him the excuse for such inaction, and no persuasion can induce him to forego his privileges of total idleness on such occasions, he will plod for hours on the bank with the tow rope, and march under a burning sun during the livelong day, with a perseverance we should scarcely expect; and he will push with the heavy punting poles for hours, or jump into the river and strain with his back against the boat, time after time, without grumbling, when the universal habit of the people prompted such exertion. So that we soon learned

not to expect our men to work according to the emergencies of the occasion, but wholly and entirely according to the 'custom of the river,' for which we soon learned to entertain either a profound respect or an intense aversion, I scarcely know which. Thus if a smile be raised at the bungling and indolence of the native sailor, let it at all events be a smile of good humour, for the Egyptian Arabs are no other than overgrown children, ready to laugh or cry at the least provocation; but withal guileless, careless, merry fellows, contented with a very little; and supremely happy and grateful for the least goodwill shown towards them. Then again they are patient and forgiving beyond expression, and never showed the least sign of any vindictive temper, reprimanded as they often were, and sometimes struck, in the furious passion into which our dragoman would occasionally work himself; cruelly and undeservedly beaten as I know they were on some boats in the anger of their impatient and provoked masters, they never dream of retaliation, but with the utmost submission receive the inflicted chastisement, perhaps with cries and tears, but without a thought of defending themselves from the attack. And then when their tyrant's wrath had subsided, appeased per-

haps by the cruel blows they had dealt, the uncomplaining sufferers would forget the outrage and be as ready to kiss the hand which had injured them, and as docile and attentive, and even merry, as they were before. Surely such a disposition should disarm all violent anger, and however provoking they may be, and indeed are at times, should atone for their deficiencies, and attract the good-will of their employers.

With the single exception of the provocation of delay, occasioned either by the indolent habits of the sailors, or by the violent head winds of which we seem to have encountered an unusual share, I know of no other drawback to perfect enjoyment in the Nile voyage. Perhaps, however, I should add the absolute banishment beyond the range of the Post Office, and the utter impossibility of communicating with home, which such a trip entails, as another and more serious impediment to the delights of Nile travel; but this, though doubtless a real detriment to comfort, when the tourist is separated for so long a period, and at so great a distance from family and home, is an evil incidental to all more extended journeys, and cannot therefore be fairly chargeable on Egypt as if it were peculiar to that land alone. At all events, with

these two exceptions all is delightful; and I can conceive no more agreeable or even luxurious mode of passing through any country than that afforded by the Nile boat. With a well-furnished and capacious home always in attendance; with a liberal table without the trouble and discomfort of a continual change of quarters at hotels; with an ample supply of servants ready to anticipate their employer's wishes; with full command of this miniature ship and an intimation of our desire to halt or go on the captain's only law; with many of the finest relics of antiquity, and some of the greatest wonders of the world, all within a very few miles from the river on which we are sailing, and all accessible at the cost of very trifling fatigue, this is indeed travelling made easy, and so far from roughing it on the Nile, it is almost too luxurious, and the more delicate in health, as well as the most indolent lover of the *dolce far niente*, may dream away their time on the deck of their boat under the awning, drinking in the balmy air of Egypt, and interested and amused by the shifting scenes on the river banks.

I have said little as yet about the climate; but my silence on that head has assuredly not arisen from any failure to appreciate its excellence, but

rather from a desire to reserve that question to the last, in order that I might give a true verdict, after our four months' sojourn in the country had come to a close. What I have said on this subject has only been by the way, and now, at the risk of repeating myself, I must sum up all my experience on this point. Here then I unhesitatingly assert that the dry warmth, the lightness of air, the total absence of fog or damp, and the magnificence of the weather far exceeded my most sanguine anticipations. We arrived in Egypt early in December; we left it at the beginning of April; and during the whole of that long period, we never saw a drop of rain, or felt any moisture in the atmosphere; we scarcely ever saw a cloud, but the brightest of skies, the most brilliant of suns, the balmiest of nights, attended us throughout. I do not mean to imply that it never rains in Upper Egypt, though Herodotus says almost as much, and proves the general rule by a single exception, which he calls a strange prodigy, when in the reign of Psammenitus a few small drops of rain fell at Egyptian Thebes, 'a thing which never happened before, and had never happened again to his time, as the Thebans themselves testify.' But this is evidently a mistake, as the inhabitants

of modern days acknowledge, and as the water-courses in the neighbouring hills prove, and the gutters or gurgoyles in some of the temple roofs clearly intimate; although a shower of rain is by no means a frequent occurrence, and (as I have said) we experienced nothing of the kind during our whole tour.

Then in Upper Egypt and Nubia we felt such heat as to many may seem insupportable, and is to some persons distasteful, but to me was most delightful, even though I took active exercise on shore with my gun in the hottest part of every day. I kept an accurate daily record of the heat and cold in our saloon, as marked by maximum and minimum thermometers, specially prepared for travellers by Messrs. Negretti and Zámbra; and it may give some notion of the high temperature in which we at one time lived, when I state that protected from the sun in the saloon, with a thorough draught blowing through it caused by opening doors, windows, and skylight, our maximum often rose to 95° and 97°, and upon one occasion touched 100°; while on deck outside it ran up to 141° when I was obliged to remove it for fear of accident, as the quicksilver had filled the entire tube. This intense heat was due not only to the sun, but

also to the hot wind which blew from the south; and passing over the burning sands of the desert, enveloped us with its scorching breath, almost like the blast of a furnace; at such times, the air was thick and heavy, but not with dampness, though it had quite the appearance of a fog. But the desert-wind or khamseen was accompanied, as I have already remarked, with the finest sand or rather impalpable dust, with which the whole atmosphere was charged; and so marvellous were the penetrating properties of this floating sand-dust, that though every window and door was shut to exclude it as much as possible, yet it contrived to insinuate itself everywhere; and everything for days afterwards was found to be covered with a gritty sandy deposit. While the khamseen was blowing (and we had several visits from it, each of two or three days' duration) respiration was not so easy, and the hot blast was so overpowering that we not only kept pretty closely on board, but we found the deck quite intolerable; and were sometimes forced to shut ourselves, with jalousies and windows closed and skylight down, within the saloon. At all other times our large skylight stood wide open by night as well as by day, which of itself is a tolerable proof of the warmth we felt

throughout this tour, though in the very heart of the winter. I made some enquiries regarding the summer heat in Upper Egypt, and learnt that it is at the hottest season almost unbearable. The English engineer's wife at Farshoot assured me that in their large cool room the thermometer would rise to 112°, and in the sun outside to 160°; but Lady Duff Gordon, who had spent the summer at Thebes, told me that by taking proper precaution, and excluding all light and air during the hottest hours of the day, as is the universal rule in all tropical latitudes, she did not find the heat oppressive beyond endurance, nor indeed suffer any inconvenience from it.

There is however no question that different constitutions are differently affected by extreme heat; and that in this respect one man's meat is another man's poison; for while I daily grew stronger and hardier, as the thermometer rose, and revelled in the intense sunshine, even spending many hours of almost every day in the desert, toiling through the heavy sand with my gun, with only a muslin turban wound round my hat to protect my head from the fierce rays of the tropical sun, my companion H., though he did not attempt to leave the boat, became weaker and

weaker, as the heat increased; his strength seemed altogether ebbing away, and he could scarcely crawl on deck, and lie under the awning; and we were quite frightened at the utter prostration of energy from which he suffered; and it was not till we returned to Lower Egypt, and the days became cooler, and the nights almost cold, that he revived from that extreme lassitude, and regained strength with the fresh invigorating breezes from the north. To myself individually the climate of Egypt has been under Providence of the greatest value; indeed, of such advantage has it proved, that I am reaping the benefit of it now, and so thoroughly set up was I by that winter's roasting, that I have been able to remain in England since during the winter months, as I had not previously done for some years; and I feel bound to record that blessing, as an inducement to others to make trial of the same remedy, which has operated so beneficially for me.

With regard to the scenery of Egypt, I have often been asked since my return whether the views on the Nile are worthy of admiration. I should be inclined unhesitatingly to reply in the affirmative, recollecting only the general impression which my mind retains. But when I subject

the question to a close scrutiny, and begin to compare the views of the country as exhibited from the Nile, with the scenery of Switzerland and Norway, Italy and Spain, France and England, I am not sure that Egyptian landscape will stand so severe a test, and that I should not mislead my readers, did I venture on so decided a verdict. And yet it is in reality beautiful, though of a peculiar character; for flat though the strips of cultivated land, or even wider plains, necessarily are, seeing they are annually inundated by the river, they are always backed by the red or yellow rocks of the desert; and these rocks, though rarely bold or grand, form a most picturesque background to our view, and from the contrast which their barren glowing heights present to the rich green of the alluvial soil so marvellous in its fertility, stand out as broad gilt frames to throw out the colours of our picture, or as deep gold settings to enhance the brilliancy of our jewels. Then the broad stream of the great river is in itself a noble sight; the palm trees with which its banks are often lined, and the villages which cluster beneath them; the ruins of vast temples which here and there stand out on the verge of the desert; the mighty pyramids which are conspicuous in

certain districts, combine to make the views of the Nile really remarkable. But there are points of the river where the rocks approach nearer the stream, as at Hagar Silsilis, at Assouan, at Philæ, and in several spots in Nubia, where the cliffs assume bolder forms and grander dimensions; and the Nile hemmed in by the mountains looks wilder and more grim, as I have seen a bull in the great arena at Madrid gather fury as he finds himself surrounded by enemies on all sides; and then the combination of rock and river scenery will stand comparison with that of any other country. Then again the living forms on the banks and the moving scenes which constantly come into our view immensely enhance the interest of our picture. The long files of women clad in dark blue robes, bearing their heavy water jars gracefully on their heads, and coming down to fill them from the Nile; the perpetual swing of the 'shadoof;' the everlasting creak of the 'sakia;' strings of laden camels sedately marching in the distance; the turbaned sheikhs leisurely ambling on diminutive donkeys on the river's brink; and a thousand trifles, insignificant in themselves but attractive to the European eye, meet us at every turn. But above all, and over all, and through all, indeed

without which Egyptian scenery would lose half its beauty, the glorious unclouded sun of those Southern skies throws a perpetual brilliancy, causing the river to gleam like silver, the green meadows to glitter like emeralds, the rocks and sands of the desert to glow like molten gold. And when evening after evening at sunset the whole heavens were lit up with the most gorgeous colours; or when at night the moon and stars stood out from the coal-black sky in that clear atmosphere, and the 'Southern Cross' rose above the horizon, no fairer scene could well be imagined than that which this majestic old river offered to view; and though tame perhaps when compared with Northern landscapes, there is a peace and a repose suited to a tropical climate; and a calmness and mystic stillness, such as best befit the waters of the venerable Nile, now rolling on towards the sea, still retaining the secret, which none yet have fairly unravelled, as to the actual source and subsequent course it has pursued.

I have already observed that in the common every-day life of an Oriental city, there are at almost every turn things passing before the eye which forcibly recall to mind the famous 'Arabian Nights' Entertainments,' in which we all revelled

in our youth. Not less strange, not less startling, and far more interesting to the Christian, are the Bible scenes which we continually witness in the unchangeable land of Egypt. There are still the very same customs observed, the very same habits adopted, the very same implements used, as they were in the time of the Patriarchs, as described in the book of Genesis; indeed there are many passages in that book which I never thoroughly understood, until I witnessed with my own eyes the manners of the modern Egyptians on the banks of the Nile. I have called attention in an earlier page to the daily food of our sailors; the pottage wherein they shred the red lentils, the very same identical mess for which Esau sold his birthright,* retained amongst the Arabs to this day. I have also mentioned amongst the ornaments worn by the women of Upper Egypt and Nubia, the nose-ring and bracelets, which are still the gifts of betrothal, as they were when Abraham's servant Eleazar placed them on the face and hands of Rebecca.† And I have spoken of the huge sycamore tree under which the Governor of Assouan held his court of justice, as, in the days

* Gen. xxv. 30.

† Gen. xxiv. 47.

of the Patriarchs, the terebinth of Abraham * and the oak of Jacob.† These are but samples of that which struck us continually throughout our sojourn in Egypt with the deepest interest, and recalled vividly before our eyes scenes of ancient times so graphically depicted in the Bible. The traveller is still entertained with freshly-baked loaves and a kid from the flock as in the days of Abraham.‡ Messes are still sent to the favoured guest as in the days of Joseph.§ Children are still carried, not in their mother's arms, but astride on her shoulder, as in the days of Hagar.‖ Bricks are still made with stubble, when straw is not to be procured, as in the time of the Israelitish bondage.¶ Friends who have been long absent still embrace one another when they meet, after the same fashion as did Esau and Jacob,** Joseph and his brethren,†† and Joseph and his father,‡‡ falling on one another's neck, and kissing on each side of the face. Presents of fruit and sweetmeats are often made to superiors with a view to conciliate their good-will, as in the days of the sons of

* Gen. xviii. 4, 8.
† Gen. xxxv. 4.
‡ Gen. xviii. 4–7.
§ Gen. xliii. 34.
‖ Gen. xxi. 14.
¶ Exod. v. 12.
** Gen. xxxiii. 4.
†† Gen. xliv. 14, 15.
‡‡ Gen. xlvi. 29.

Israel.* The shoes are removed from the feet by Coptic Christians as well as Muslims, in token of reverence for the person or place, as in the time of Moses † and Joshua.‡ So again the upper end of the room is the more honourable. He who desires to make an humble request of his superior kisses the skirts of his clothing. The lecturer sits down to teach, surrounded by his pupils ranged on the floor around him. In short, whether with regard to their domestic life, their dress, their occupations, their agricultural implements, their musical instruments, their customs as recorded in Holy Writ, we not only saw these things depicted in the temples and tombs, those vivid photographs of Egyptian life four thousand years ago; but we beheld with our own eyes and in actual life the exact counterpart of these old-world scenes, so faithfully delineated on the walls of the tombs, and often alluded to in the books of Moses.

With regard to Egyptian architecture enough has already been said to call attention to its peculiar characteristics of solidity and strength, as well as to the wondrous skill of those early builders, who not only contrived to cut the hardest granite, and even the still harder basalt, and then

* Gen. xliii. 11. † Exodus iii. 5. ‡ Joshua v. 15.

engrave with true and delicate lines their intricate hieroglyphics on its smoothed surface; provided though they appear to have been with only tools of bronze; but to transport and raise these massive blocks, and adjust them with such nicety that the joints can scarcely be perceived on the closest scrutiny. I am not about to inflict on the reader a disquisition upon this subject, nor even theorise on the probable causes which induced the Egyptians to adopt this remarkable style, which no other nation of the world has ever attempted to imitate; neither will I tax his patience by detailing the extraordinary dimensions which the component parts of the great temples measure, and which can alone really give an approximate idea of their magnitude; for this has been done by others more competent to the task; and the measurements which I took, and the calculations which I made in consequence do but corroborate the assertions of those whom we gladly acknowledge our masters in Egyptian antiquities. But I may say here that we visited almost every temple, with scarcely an exception, to be found on either bank of the Nile in either Egypt or Nubia, and carefully examined their structure; and so diligent was F. with his camera, with which he

was continually occupied, that he brought away a splendid portfolio of about 140 photographs, comprising views of nearly every temple we saw; all of which seem to have some distinctive feature, and no two of which are altogether alike. All travellers however are not agreed on the interest usually felt for these grand ruins, for we were not a little amused at the naïve opinion given with the utmost gravity on this subject by a young countryman who had just completed his tour up the river, when he solemnly observed that 'he didn't think much of Egyptian temples, which were in reality nothing more than a lot of stones piled one on top of t'other.' Perhaps he would have passed the same verdict on the cathedrals of Strasburg and Milan.

But let not the Nile traveller be disheartened by any such depreciatory opinion; he will find the said stones piled up in a very wonderful manner; and a great deal to interest him deeply both on board and ashore. Nay, as the Nile has now become a favourite resort of those in delicate health, who wisely come out to breathe the balmy air of that glorious climate, and therefore whose want of strength necessarily confines them to the deck of their dahabeah during the greater portion of their

time, let me suggest to such to ponder over the following problems as they recline on their divans and watch the curling smoke from their chibouques; problems upon which they will never tire to speculate, but yet well worthy attention, inasmuch as they have hitherto baffled all enquiry, and have proved nuts too hard for the united band of Egyptologists to crack.

I. With regard to the Nile, which rolls its sweet yellow waters so gently towards the sea.

1. What is its true source? for though all honour be due to Speke and Grant and Baker for the perseverance and undaunted courage with which they triumphed over difficulties, and removed the many formidable obstacles which threatened to defeat their object; as well as for extending the knowledge of geographers in that interesting region, verifying the ancient discoveries of the exploring Ptolemy, and proving the general accuracy of his account of the two lakes near the equator from which the waters of the Nile flow—a work not to be accomplished without the most consummate tact as well as prudence and patience; and to which, as they went farther day by day, they literally carried their lives in their hands; so surrounded were they with suspicious grasping

tyrannical savage despots—yet I cannot but agree with Burton, that lakes are not the real sources of rivers, but rather the reservoirs in which they collect their strength for their onward flow; and I submit that the investigation must yet be carried on to the south of Lakes Victoria Nyanza, and Albert Nyanza, and perhaps through Lakes Tanganyika and Nyassa as well, ere the whole question regarding the sources of the Nile can be really said to be set at rest.

2. How shall we account for its so regular annual rising, and as regular subsidence, on which the very existence of the Egyptian people depends? It is true, the height to which the flood attains may slightly vary; but almost to a day it may be calculated when the increase will begin, when it will reach its highest point, and when the decrease will commence. And even if the flood set in at a quicker rate than usual, as is sometimes the case, it is well known that proportionally to the rapidity of the flow will be the ebb; and, vice versâ, a gentle rise invariably denotes a gradual fall. This is an old problem, which puzzled philosophers in the time of Herodotus; and though the actual cause of the inundation is undoubtedly the copious fall of rain in the tropical regions on both sides of the

equator, that broad statement will not satisfy the careful enquirer or account for the amazing regularity and punctuality with which the beneficent river annually performs its task, of such vital importance to those who dwell within its influence.

3. There is yet another question connected with this mysterious river, which has never yet received a satisfactory reply; viz. Whence comes the fertilising matter which it brings down, and which causes the lands it irrigates to produce such extraordinary crops? That Nile water contains a thick muddy substance in solution is palpable at once, and that when allowed to stand in the porous water-jars it becomes clear, leaving a sediment at the bottom, is equally notorious. This sediment has been repeatedly analysed, with the strange result that organic matter forms no inconsiderable part of its ingredients; and anew we find ourselves wholly at a loss to conjecture whence can this organic matter be derived, in such regular undeviating proportions; for I cannot for a moment admit the hypothesis proposed by some that it arises from the countless herds of wild animals which throng its banks in Central Africa.

II. Let us now turn to the Pyramids, and see what unexplained mysteries those gigantic works

yet conceal. Pliny remarked in his day that the *main questions* to be asked in Egypt are :—1. How were the stones of the Pyramids raised?—2. Who built them?—3. When were they erected? I think we may take it for granted that the latter queries of the Roman writer are satisfactorily answered by the researches of modern Egyptologists; but the first enquiry still demands a reply, and there are other problems connected with them hitherto unsolved.

1. How then did the workmen raise the enormous blocks of stone, when they had transported them across the Nile from the quarries?—for the upper courses had to be lifted to a perpendicular height of four hundred and fifty feet above the plain, and many of the stones which composed them are above thirty feet in length, and of proportionate breadth and thickness. This is a question which involuntarily suggests itself to every traveller as he climbs the great blocks of the pyramids; and, perpetually recurring, refuses to be laid to rest by the offhand hypothesis usually suggested, of a huge embankment of sand, or of an inclined plane from the base to the summit.

2. Scarcely less easy is the problem how those masons of early times fitted the huge blocks of stone one to another with such nice precision that

the joints are in many cases hardly discernible; wherein they not only proved their mechanical skill in adjusting the unwieldy masses at pleasure, but their workmanlike knowledge of squaring, chiselling, and adapting after a fashion which is seldom equalled and could not be surpassed in Europe in the present day.

3. We may still fairly put the question, for what purpose were such elaborate and stupendous mountains of stone raised? for the small sarcophagi hitherto found in their respective chambers scarcely satisfy the explorer that such enormous caskets were provided for such disproportionate tenants; which would indeed be carrying out the adage, 'Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus.' So that whether the astronomical or other theory be correct, we feel constrained to hesitate in accepting the sepulchral view as sufficient motive for the labour. But indeed the longer we ponder on the many questions, of which the pyramids are the fertile source, the more astonished and bewildered we seem; and I apprehend we shall be obliged at last to leave the matter as the graceful lines of Mr. Bode express it:

> Unchanged they stand: they awe the land
> Beneath the clear dark sky;

But at what time their points sublime
They heavenward reared, and why—
The gods that see all things that be
Can better tell than I.*

III. The next group of problems refers to the temples of the ancient Egyptians, which are indeed prolific subjects for discussion and theory.

1. We may ask again, but with increased wonder, not only how they raised the enormous roof stones to such a giddy height, but how they poised them with such exceeding accuracy on the capitals of the columns, which they thus bridged over? And as an instance of their immense size, I may observe that the sandstone blocks which roof the doorway of the hall of assembly at Karnac (sixty feet from the ground) are forty feet in length, and five feet both in breadth and thickness.

2. How were the massive obelisks and the huge colossi of granite which flanked the courts or guarded the pylons of the temples, transported from the quarries at Syene, often 130, sometimes no less than 800 miles? These obelisks were often nearly 100 feet in height, and some of them weighed 300 tons; while the great Colossus of Remeses II., lying in fragments before the Memnonium at Thebes, is calculated to have weighed

* Ballads from Herodotus, p. 102.

the prodigious amount of 888 tons! This is indeed a subject for astonishment and speculation, no less than for admiration at the mechanical skill of that clever nation.

3. Not less remarkable, and certainly not less difficult to answer, is the enquiry, How did the ancient Egyptians contrive to cut their hieroglyphics so delicately, to carve their statues so admirably, and withal to work such sharp fine lines, sometimes several inches deep, not only in the hardest granite and syenite, but even in the still harder basalt, without any tools of iron, but only with bronze or copper implements? how did they temper these soft metals, and give them an edge which should penetrate the hardest rocks, when modern masons and sculptors can scarcely accomplish the like feat with the most approved appliances?

IV. Or again, to pass on to the Tombs.

1. Why were the walls of those immense galleries and chambers which penetrated the rocks above three hundred feet, so elaborately painted? the pictures which covered those vast spaces so carefully executed, and often not a single foot of wall left blank? To what end was such laborious toil? who should ever behold the work when

finished with such exceeding care? and had those ancient kings really an idea that their souls should inhabit the sepulchre where their body lay embalmed, and that it should delight itself with such memorials of life in the body?

2. Again, how did they light these painted halls, both while the work was in course of execution, or when it was inspected by the king? Still more might one ask the question with regard to the dark chambers in the rock-hewn temples of Aboo-Simbel and others, whose walls are likewise adorned with most elaborate decoration. That they must have had *some* means of lighting up the galleries and corridors they had so artistically embellished is beyond a doubt; but of what sort that light might be, which could illuminate the lofty and gloomy halls of those dark caverns is still a moot point, which has never yet been satisfactorily explained.

3. The subjects of the paintings, in many cases clear enough, but in others wholly unintelligible: the great green serpent, winged and with human feet and head, which is represented in almost all the tombs, as drawing its many coils along the surface of the wall; the strange figures conducting the soul to judgment, the quaint devices, the

inexplicable processions, offer an ample field for speculation and study.

V. Then there is the fertile question of chronology and dates, which may well occupy the whole journey from Cairo to Wady Halfeh and back.

VI. There is the no less wide subject of the mythology of Egypt, and the many theories entertained thereupon.

VII. There are the hieroglyphics; which, even with the aid of M. Champollion's work, are not to be mastered in a day.

And I conceive that I have suggested topics for thought and for discussion, which will not be exhausted during the whole tour. Such at all events were the questions upon which we were continually harping on board the 'Southern Cross,' as we speculated on these abstruse mysteries; now advancing one theory, now another, but seldom finding such a solution to each problem discussed, as satisfied us that we had discovered the clue to guide us out of these most intricate labyrinths.

And now I trust that I have shown in the foregoing pages that there are attractions in this strange old land of Egypt, which are pre-eminently calculated to draw the tourist to its shores. There is a climate so delicious that it is positive enjoy-

ment to breathe the pure air of those balmy regions; there is occupation enough on shore to employ the most energetic and ardent explorer of antiquities, and the novice in Oriental customs and Oriental scenes. And there are problems and speculations engendered by such researches, enough to fill up all the spare moments of the most thoughtful, as he reclines under the awning on the deck of his dahabeah, and gently floats along the stream. Indeed I can scarcely conceive disappointment accompanying a Nile voyage, though I know how difficult it is to satisfy the exaggerated expectations of many tourists; but here a prolific purveyor has catered for every taste and provided material for every appetite; while the father of rivers, coming down from unknown sources, having traversed unexplored lands occupied by unknown tribes, rolls its broad deep yellow waters towards the sea, mysterious alike in its old age as in its infancy; a river which commands our admiration, our respect and our esteem, and to which we became more and more attached every day, the ever-famous, the deservedly lauded, the venerable Nile.

'Claudite jam rivos, pueri; sat prata biberunt.'*

* Virg. *Bucol.* iii. 11.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE ORNITHOLOGY OF EGYPT.

I HAVE purposely reserved to the present time all mention of the ornithology of Egypt and Nubia, and I have as far as possible avoided all reference to the many species of birds, which in reality occupied the greater portion of my time and attention during the Nile voyage, because I was unwilling to break the thread of my narrative of the general incidents of the tour, and to weary with my special hobby those of my readers who have no interest in the feathered tribes; and also because I can now devote a chapter to them exclusively, and recount in their proper order all that came under my notice during the whole four months which I spent in those countries.

I have already mentioned that a double-barrelled gun was my constant companion on board and ashore. It was always loaded—the right barrel with small shot, the left with a green cartridge—so that

whether busy in the saloon, or sitting on deck, I could fire at a moment's notice at any specimen wading in the shallows, or running on the river's bank, or flying overhead; and many a trophy which now graces my collection was obtained in this way. In like manner in my daily expeditions on shore, amongst the palm forests and plantations, the castor-oil shrubs, and the acacias, dôm palms, camel-thorns, and other trees which in some places thickly lined the water's edge, I was never without my trusty gun for securing rarities, and my double field-glass for watching and examining the birds I chanced to find—the latter, I would emphatically observe, quite as indispensable to the practical ornithologist as the former, and far more useful in learning the habits of birds with which he was not previously acquainted.

So in like manner in all our excursions to the temples, and tombs, and pyramids; when on donkeys or on foot, or in the small sandal wherewith we frequently preceded or followed the larger boat, my gun was never absent; and many a stray shot did I have, and many a victim did I secure when bent on a far different errand; so that I very seldom lost an opportunity of making myself as well acquainted with the birds of Egypt, as was possible in so limited a time.

That I was not unsuccessful, and that I was persevering in my efforts, may be inferred from the fact that at the completion of the tour, I despatched from Alexandria to England a large case containing one hundred and fifty-three birds' skins, comprising sixty-three species, all of which I had procured and preserved with my own hands, during the time I spent in Egypt. At the same time I must hasten to assert that I committed no wanton slaughter, and that with the exception of those few species which proved a pleasant variety at our table, I made a point of never shooting any bird whose skin I did not mean to preserve: a rule which I beg to commend to the particular notice of future travellers on the Nile and elsewhere; and a caution by no means unnecessary, for the purposeless and indiscriminate persecution to which the feathered tribes are sometimes exposed, to gratify the caprice of the moment, or for mere practice, is as unjustifiable as it is cruel.

In order that I might make no mistake regarding the names of species of which I entertained any doubt, I submitted a box of skins to the judgment of the Rev. H. B. Tristram, the very talented author of the 'Land of Israel,' and of 'Travels in the Great Sahara,' and as expert an ornithologist as author;

and as he very kindly examined and named every specimen about which I had any hesitation, I have now the greatest confidence in the correctness of every species here described. There are more full and scientific lists of the birds of Egypt published in the 'Ibis' by Messrs. E. C. Taylor,* A. L. Adams,† and S. S. Allen;‡ and with these the intending tourist on the Nile will do well to make himself familiar; but as I confine my observations to those species only which came under my own eyes, I need do no more than refer to those admirable lists for more extended information on the subject; and I would especially commend to the ornithologist's notice the very correct and graphic account of the field of observation of birds which Egypt presents, with which Dr. Adams' excellent paper is prefaced. Let me here too add a very necessary caution, that the traveller ascending the Nile from the Delta, and finding himself surrounded in Lower Egypt with vast clouds of birds of many species, must not, if he prolong his tour to the second Cataract, expect to meet the same ornithological profusion attend him throughout his voyage. He will not

* Vol. i. p. 41. † Vol. vi. p. 1.

‡ Vol. vi. p. 233. See also vol. iv. p. 357; v. 33, 156, 363; vi. 1, 97; and iii. (New Series), 48.

only find as he advances towards Assouan, that the great bulk of water-fowl does not penetrate so far south, and as he passes through Nubia, that the feathered tribes are scantily represented in that barren inhospitable kingdom; but as he returns in the early spring to the mud-banks and sand-flats of Upper Egypt, he will, unless forewarned, be disappointed to find that the innumerable flocks of ducks and geese and waders have for the most part deserted their winter quarters, and departed for their summer haunts.

If I were asked to point out the most promising head-quarters for the ornithologist, I should undoubtedly indicate the Delta, and perhaps mention Lake Menzaleh, near the Damietta branch of the Nile, as the most favoured spot. I should also call attention in Upper Egypt to the district lying between Beni Hassan on the north and Esnè on the south; and I think that within those limits, and up to the beginning of March, that must be a fastidious sportsman indeed, who is not satisfied with the variety, while the quantity of birds which will swarm around him every day, will be more than enough to satisfy the most exacting. And I should add to these favoured localities the great plain of Edfoo, as a notorious rendezvous for many species.

There is one other general remark which I would make. It is with reference to the size of birds common to Europe and Egypt; for it appears to me that the latter are oftentimes smaller than our own species. The same observation has been made by Denon with regard to such of the mammalia as are found in both; and he exemplifies his theory by instancing the wolf and the hare. Now without venturing to appear dogmatical, where I may very easily be mistaken, I would invite the attention of ornithologists generally to this subject, and I would more especially mention the hawks, as prominent proofs of the diminution in size which I venture to attribute to the feathered denizens in Egypt.

I now proceed to describe in regular order the several species with which I fell in on the Nile.

1. *Vultur fulvus* (Griffon Vulture). Yarrell.
2. *Vultur cinereus* (Cinereous Vulture). Bree.

This was practically my first acquaintance with vultures; for though I had met with *V. fulvus* on the coast of Spain, and seen the Lämmergeier on the pass of St. Gothard in Switzerland, these were but rare stragglers, seen at some distance, and only once in a way; but here the vultures of both sorts

(for I soon learnt to distinguish *cinereus* from its congener) abounded in vast quantities when attracted by suitable food, and I should say they occur in about equal numbers. They are certainly despicable and most cowardly birds, however useful as scavengers, as I must confess they undoubtedly are. Almost my first near and prolonged observations of them took place on the morning of our second day's sail from Cairo. A light breeze carried us with full sail very slowly up the river, in the early morning; when sitting on deck, waiting for breakfast, I beheld *V. fulvus* tugging away at a carcase on a sandbank. He was a fine bird in admirable feather, but he did not show to advantage in point of pluck; for soon three Hooded Crows came self-invited to the banquet; and as now one and now another jumped up at the head of the vulture, or fluttered with outstretched wings over him in defiance, the great overgrown cowardly monster retreated from the prey, and was content to watch the feast from a little distance. Then when the crows retired, he would cautiously advance to the savoury morsel, only to be bullied again by his diminutive antagonists, one of which sufficed to drive him back in abject terror from the spoil. And this game went on for a good half-

hour, till a bend in the river took us out of sight. Neither did further acquaintance with this or the allied species tend to raise them in my opinion: they were heavy, stupid, cowardly, ungainly, and unclean to the very end of the chapter. In regard to numbers, I find by my note-book that on one day I saw nine Griffon and Cinereous Vultures on one sandbank, and fourteen on another at 200 yards distance: on the next day twelve, and on the following day twenty: wherever a carcase became putrid, there the vultures were to be seen in flocks, but sometimes I saw no vultures for a day. Carrion however, of one sort or another, seemed to abound in Egypt; and then these useful scavengers soon scented out their prey, and worked hard at their avocation, till they had effectually disposed of the objectionable matter. Notwithstanding their cowardice and their filthy habits, these vultures are certainly fine-looking birds, and as a carcase was floating down the river, it was interesting to see one fly to it from the sandbank where they were congregated, perch upon the half-immersed body, and flap vehemently with extended wings as it tore with its powerful beak at the putrefying mass. This would tempt another vulture to come off with outstretched neck to the repast, when the first comer

would immediately retire; and thus they succeeded one another as long as I had them in sight, none attempting to dispute the right of the new comer but retiring with good grace, or perhaps I should more strictly say, with that innate cowardice, which seems to preclude resistance even against other members of their own species. Sometimes these birds might be seen in an immense body, soaring in the air at an incredible height; now sailing each in his own circle, anon floating motionless on outstretched pinions. Looking steadily at them with my glass, I have watched them by the hour together, and have counted as many as a hundred and twenty-five individuals in a single flock, although it is evident I could not see them all; now one and now another appearing as a mere speck in the extreme distance, and others again disappearing while I was watching them through my glass, till they sailed away out of sight.

3. *Neophron percnopterus* (Egyptian Vulture). Yar.

By the side of the Griffon—and one may often see them together—this is but a sorry and diminutive bird; a disgusting creature too, and of still more filthy habits than the last. They are to be met with on all the sandbanks, to which they seem

to love to retire when gorged; and they frequent the temples and ruins, sitting on some magnificent column, and with trailing wings and drooping tail brooding like some evil genius over the remains of bygone splendour; or one may see them on the outskirts of all the towns and large villages, squatting on the open ground, the adults with yellow plumage, the young of a sombre brown; so that it is difficult to persuade the un-ornithological Englishman that they are not birds of distinct species. If we sailed near them, as we often did, when they stood with ruffled plumage on a sandbank, they bore a most astonishing resemblance to Cochin-China fowls, and the Arabic name of 'Pharaoh's Hen' seemed most appropriate. Occasionally I have seen a flock of these most unsavoury birds soaring high in the air, like the Griffons described above, and in no less numbers: two hundred being the most I ever counted at one time. This habit of congregating for aërial manœuvres was something quite unlooked-for by me. I had always supposed that vultures, like carnivorous animals generally, were not gregarious, but that when they did assemble, it was from the common attraction of some putrid filth, and that they had come, as we may truly say of this bird, each on his own hook. But here they

were unmistakably associating, not for business, but for amusement, wheeling in circles, about and among, above and below one another; and with all my dislike of the species, I must in common candour confess, that graceful and elegant evolutions they were. What however has given me the greatest disgust at these unclean birds, so that I shall ever shudder to my dying day at the thought of vultures, was the sight of above a hundred of them of all three species, congregated on the bank near Gow-el-Kebeer, gorged to the full with human flesh, as I have already described; and I shall always think of them for the future with a feeling of positive revulsion, calling to mind the dreadful banquet on which they had fed, and recollecting how in company with some twenty dogs, which had evidently lost home and master in the disturbances, they sat with drooping wings and distended crops on the river-bank, sleeping in the hot sunshine.

4. *Falco nævius* (Spotted Eagle). Temminck.

I had several opportunities of observing this handsome bird, although I only killed one, as it rose from the bank, and flew over the sandal, in which I was preceding the larger vessel on a shoot-

ing expedition. The eagle was perched motionless on the black mud of the Nile, just above the water, and under the shade of a very high overhanging bank near Erment; and as we were pulling rapidly down the stream in the strong current he rose, and was about to fly across the river, when a successful shot brought him headlong into the water. A really noble fellow he was when we picked him out of the stream, and spread him out to dry, his wings extending across the boat, and projecting on either side of the bulwarks; though the two Arab sailors who were at the oars, judiciously refrained from touching him, till they were satisfied that that powerful hooked beak and those strong and sharp talons were stilled for ever in death. Although this was a fine specimen, it was by no means an old bird, but the characteristic spots were far more distinct than in another and older one, which was killed shortly after by a friend, when we compared our two trophies—the younger bird in this instance assuming the anomalous position of superseding the more adult in giving the specific title from its own immature plumage.

5. *Pandion haliœëtus* (The Osprey). Yar.

Very rarely indeed did I meet with this fine species. I believe that five individuals comprised all that I saw; and yet the noble Nile, with its abundance of fish, and large extent of islands and sandbanks, seemed to offer most inviting haunts. When I did meet with it, perched on the mast of a sunken boat in the midst of the river, or flying overhead on slow steady wing, I could not but admire its strong flight, its firm compact shape, its active habits, and wonder that I saw it so seldom, other observers in former years having described it as of common occurrence—Dr. Adams even speaking of it as 'characteristic of the Nile.' It may be that for a bird of so proverbially shy and retiring habits, the Pasha's steam tugs which have begun to ascend and descend the Nile, like snorting whales blowing out volumes of black smoke, are too alarming; and have scared it from its former haunts, at any rate during the day-time: just as I have observed that crocodiles, which used to be seen daily basking on the sandbanks in considerable numbers, are now rarely seen below the First Cataracts.

6. *Falco æsalon* (The Merlin). Yar.
7. *Falco tinnunculus* (The Kestrel). Yar.
8. *Falco nisus* (The Sparrow-hawk). Tem.

These are all extremely common in Egypt; but all seemed to my eyes of diminutive size and of brighter plumage than with us; the kestrel more especially puts on a very brilliant and ruddy hue. *Æsalon* might always be seen among the sont or acacia-trees near the villages; *nisus* preferred higher trees and a little farther removed from human habitations; while *tinnunculus* seemed to hover over every field and perch on every post, and to be wholly unconcerned at the presence of man; perhaps bearing in mind the tradition which may have descended through its ancestors, of the reverence once paid to it, and of the punishment of death inflicted on any who should either wilfully or unintentionally destroy so sacred a bird. As I shot a large series of them, it is well for me that such ancient Egyptian laws are exploded.

9. *Milvus ater* (The Black Kite). Bree.
10. *Milvus Ægyptius* (The Arabian Kite). Bree.

The former certainly by far the most common, but both continually to be seen in astonishing numbers. I calculated from repeated observations

that on an average about three-fourths of the falconidæ seen daily would belong to these two species; and how abundant the falconidæ were may be judged from the following fact. Soon after arriving at Cairo, and when new to the country, and unaccustomed as yet to the prodigious multitude of birds of this order, I had ascended to the top of the minaret of the famous old mosque 'Tayloon,' whence a grand panorama of Cairo and its environs—desert, pyramids, Nile, and a large portion of the Delta—was to be seen. While admiring this glorious view, it was scarcely possible to avoid remarking the falconidæ soaring over the city far and near; and I at once resolved to take a census of them then and there, as seen at that time from the minaret. The result was that with my back to the building, and therefore with not above a third of the horizon in view, I counted thirty-five birds; while by walking round the little gallery, and examining the whole view, I distinctly saw, without a glass, above one hundred specimens of this order. But for the colour of the beak *M. ater* and *M. Ægyptius* might have been easily confounded together; but even when they were on the wing it was not difficult to see this never-failing mark of distinction; the light-coloured beak of *Ægyptius*

unmistakeably pointing out the species. They were both most fearless and impudent birds; several of them would come down into the narrow court-yard just outside my room in Shepheard's Hotel at Cairo, seize any offal they might find there, and retire to devour it at leisure on the roof of the house; or they would perch on a wall within twenty feet of my open window, and scarcely move off when they saw me gazing at them hard by. Again they would follow our boat up the river as if attracted by curiosity, or more probably from experience, that scraps are occasionally cast overboard, which proved a welcome addition to their larder. Sometimes I think they must have been very hard-up for a dinner, for I have watched them scouring over land and water in eager search with apparently very little result. And as they come peering over the rocks or trees, sailing on easy wing, a marked peculiarity in their appearance arises from their general habit of compressing the neck within narrow compass, so that the bird gives one the idea of a man shrugging his shoulders, so closely does the head seem to join on to the wings. They are much infested with a large parasite, which in some specimens swarmed to a very disagreeable extent; but notwithstanding its habits,

the bird had by no means such an evil odour as many other more clean-feeding species, and its long lanceolate feathers edged with rufous give it quite a handsome appearance on near acquaintance, though generally I regarded the kites as dull, mean-looking birds, of little interest but from their numbers.

11. *Elanus melanopterus* (Black-winged Kite).

This very pretty little member of the falcon family is common in Lower Egypt, but soon becomes scarcer as you advance farther south. On shooting one and picking him up wounded, but not killed, I could not but admire his magnificent eyes—so large, so lustrous, the iris of such a brilliant red; and the pure white of his plumage, the clear ash colour of his wing-covert, his compact and withal elegant shape caused me to regard him as the prettiest of the whole family. I have a very strong opinion that this bird is intended in some of the hieroglyphics cut in the temples and tombs, scores of which I copied, and most of them marvellous outlines of species we know well, and whose portraits, for accuracy of shape and delineation of the most characteristic points, it would even puzzle Mr. Wolff, if confined to outline, to excel; and

many of them are as fresh now, and the colours as unfaded, as when they were cut and painted some four thousand years ago.

12. *Falco sacer* (Saker Falcon). Bree.

This splendid species was seen on several occasions. My first introduction to it was on the top of the propylon of the very perfect and recently excavated temple of Edfoo. We had been exploring this most interesting building, and I had consigned my gun to the care of one of our sailors, while I mounted by the stone staircase to the top of the lofty propylons which flank the gateway on either side. Armed with a lighted candle, for the staircase was perfectly dark, and followed by at least a dozen Arab boys demanding backsheesh, I had blown out my candle, and had just emerged on the top, when on the parapet, within ten feet of my head, I saw the most magnificent specimen of a true falcon I ever beheld in a wild state. The bird must, I think, have been asleep, for notwithstanding my noisy followers, I gazed at him for a full minute before he was aware of my presence; and when he did turn his head slowly round, and beheld the invasion of those sacred precincts, he slowly dived below the parapet and was out of sight

in a moment. Subsequently I saw others of this fine species; but none, dead or alive, ever came near this presiding genius of Edfoo in size and beauty of colour. He was probably a very old bird, for his general plumage was grey, with a broad margin of white to every feather; and he was of very large size.

13. *Falco rufinus* (Long-legged Buzzard). Bree.

I killed a very fair series of this buzzard; though so much do the birds in immature plumage differ from adults, that I confess I did not consider them to be of the same species, until Mr. Tristram settled the question by naming them for me. Many indeed and long were the examinations of my falconidæ on board our Nile boat by amateur collectors, of whom there were several in Egypt in 1865; but we were always at fault when we came to this species; and at last I put them away fairly baffled, and resolved to attempt no farther solution of the difficulty till my arrival in England. A very old bird amongst them is of a bright tawny colour, with uniform light-chestnut head, neck, throat, chest, and back; while others in immature plumage are streaked above and below with more or less dark feathers: *rufinus* is of fearless

disposition, little caring for the approach of man, and to this circumstance I attribute the ease with which I procured specimens. It is, as its trivial name implies, of unusual length of leg, though scarcely to the extent to enable one readily to distinguish it from its congeners.

14. *Circus æruginosus* (Marsh Harrier). Yar.
15. *Circus cyaneus* (Hen Harrier). Yar.
16. *Circus pallidus* (Pale-chested Harrier). Bree.

The former species occurred in very much larger numbers than any of its congeners; and yet *cyaneus* and *pallidus* were frequently seen, skimming over the ground, or perched on a post or bank, but *æruginosus* was extremely abundant, and might be met with every day in Lower Egypt; but became rarer as we advanced up the river.

17. *Strix brachyotos* (Short-eared Owl). Yar.

Though I never met with this bird alive in Egypt, yet I procured one in a fresh state in a singular way. It was when riding through the ruins of Memphis to the famous temple of Serapeum, very recently excavated by M. Mariette and the French engineers, that on passing through a grove of magnificent palm-trees, at the very edge of the desert, I espied *brachyotos* on the ground.

Desiring the Arab who attended my donkey to pick it up and hand it to me, I found it still warm, with no mark of a wound upon it, but in the most emaciated condition, though in fine feather. It had evidently fallen from the palm-tree beneath which I found it, and I suppose met its death (as is so common a case among the human inhabitants of this land) from sheer starvation. However I prepared its skin, and a very fine and bright specimen it is.

18. *Strix flammea* (White Owl). Yar.

I met with this bird but once, though I believe it is not uncommon in certain districts.

19. *Strix ascalaphus* (Egyptian Eared Owl). Bree.

This bird occurs very sparingly in Egypt, and only in a few favoured districts, which seems to be the case with many other denizens of the Nile. One was killed near Minieh, another near Dendera, and none others were seen. It is of beautiful plumage, the markings and pencillings on the soft full feathers so delicately and harmoniously blending with the different shades.

20. *Strix meridionalis* (Southern Owl).

This very pretty little owl occurs in great abundance, and may constantly be seen in the palm-trees, where it shelters itself from the sun within

the shade of the overhanging branches. My first acquaintance with it began at the great Pyramid of Ghizeh. I had just descended from the top of that artificial mountain of stone, and had emerged from the interior, all the chambers and galleries of which we had explored with torches, amid the yells of our self-invited attending Arabs; and, glad to escape from the stifling heat of those close chambers, where one felt oppressed at the recollection that there were acres of solid stone over one's head and all around, I had wandered round the base and was making my way to the Sphinx, when I beheld *S. meridionalis* perched on a block of stone, and staring at my intrusion into his domain, though what he did there, out in the sandy desert, far away from his friendly palm-trees and cultivation of any sort, I could not conceive. But he paid the penalty which his truant habits entailed, and now graces my collection as a memorial of that memorable spot and memorable day. Subsequently I fell in with these birds very often, and on one occasion had shot one as he sat on a palm, when he rolled over and lodged in the branch near the top of the tree. However the magic word *backsheesh* addressed to the crowd of Arab boys who invariably dog one's footsteps on shore, caused one of those active

urchins to run up the palm-tree like a squirrel, throw down the bird, and as nimbly skip back again to the earth eager for his reward, though I should have thought that the naked legs and feet of even an Arab boy would hardly venture to attempt the sharp and rugged stem of the palm. *Backsheesh* however to the smallest conceivable amount will tempt the Arab boy to wondrous exertions; and that they are easily contented with trifling remuneration may be inferred from the fact that one of my friends, whose small change was expended, made a lad supremely happy by the munificent gift of an exploded copper cap after he had discharged his gun. *S. meridionalis* is essentially a sociable bird, frequenting the palms which invariably encircle the villages of the fellaheen, and appearing to live on the most friendly terms with the inhabitants; he is a plump comfortable little owl with brilliant yellow eyes and of contented mien.

21. *Lanius dealbatus.*

Only once did I meet with this fine shrike, which so closely resembles *excubitor*, and for which I mistook it, till set right by Mr. Tristram. I fell in with it at a very memorable spot, and on a day which I shall ever recollect, as productive of more

new species to my collection than any other day before or since. It was on my way back to Wady Halfeh from the Second Cataracts; I had just left the extreme southern point to which we attained, and had discarded my donkey, and was shooting my way back by the river bank; and the very first bird I met with was this large shrike, which I concluded to be either *excubitor* or the continental *L. major*, and which I saw perched on the topmost spray of a bushy sont or acacia overhanging the river. I had already followed it for some little distance, and now despairing of a nearer shot, I aimed with a green cartridge, and was so fortunate as to find it dead on the sand, when I reached the tree. This was the only occasion on which I saw it, neither did I observe another specimen in the collections of skins which I saw on other dahabeahs; therefore I conclude that the bird is not common in Egypt, or perhaps is confined during the winter months to the southern districts.

22. *Lanius personatus* (Masked Shrike). Tem.

It is most strange to me that this species is not mentioned in any of the lists of Egyptian birds by Messrs. Taylor, Adams and Allen; because in

many districts it was so extremely plentiful, and in Nubia was by far the commonest bird amongst the camel-thorns which line the river banks. I am inclined however to think that the bird had only just arrived from more southern regions, and was either exceptionally common when I saw it, or more probably exceptionally early in its migration; and I am led to this opinion by the fact that an ornithological friend in a former trip up the Nile had never met with it; and also that I did not see it till I reached Wady Halfeh; so that it was only at that, the extreme limit of our journey southwards, and on the return journey down the river, that I found it in such abundance. The habits of the species seem intensely solitary; for though I have counted twenty in a morning walk down the river bank I never found two in company, or upon the same bush. It is a fine active strong lively bird, and the contrast of colour in its plumage gives it a smart dapper appearance, as it perches, like its congeners, on the very topmost spray.

23. *Turdus cyaneus* (Blue Thrush). Linnæus.

Occasionally but by no means frequently did I meet with this bird. It was an old friend, whose acquaintance I had made the previous year, and

had followed it amongst the orange groves of Villefranche, Nice, and Mentone, and other of its haunts on the North-Italian coast; and here it was again in the same smart livery, as much at home on the rocks by the side of the Nile as on the cliffs of the Cornice. I was quite pleased to recognise it again as an old friend, though I am afraid I gave it somewhat too warm a reception for its comfort.

24. *Ixos obscurus* (Dusky Ixos). Bree.

I was prepared by Dr. Adams' most valuable list of Egyptian birds to find what he calls a bulbul (*Pycnonotus Arsinoë*) among the palm-trees at Wady Halfeh. Therefore quite early in the morning, for we reached our anchorage here in the night, I sallied forth with my gun amongst the very extensive groves of palms which enclose this scattered Nubian village. Nor was I disappointed; for soon I was attracted by a note such as I had never heard before; and after a little patient waiting, descried the Dusky Ixos flitting from palm-branch to reed-covered hut, where amongst the rough rafters of palm it hopped and dodged, just as house sparrows do here. Not wishing to fire among the reed-thatched huts, which were very thickly in-

habited by women and children, it was not without difficulty that I could procure specimens from the palm-trees adjacent; and at last my manœuvres were watched by at least fifty of the female and youthful population, all black as soot, the former offering rings, bracelets, necklaces and nose-rings for sale; the latter perfectly naked and learning to beg for backsheesh from the most tender years. I was not prepared to find *Ixos obscurus* thus domesticated amongst the mud huts of the inhabitants, and I met with it in no other locality; but here it was, quite at home with the swarthy Nubians, to whose complexion it had no little resemblance; nor did I find one in the palms or acacias away from the village, though I wandered amongst them for a couple of hours.

25. *Sylvia Suecica* (Blue-throated Warbler). Tem.

Though this pretty little warbler takes the place of our own favourite *rubecula* throughout Egypt, and though it is tolerably tame, it has none of that undaunted familiar confidence so conspicuous in the redbreast, but it is a charming little bird; and with head on one side listening, or searching for food among the newly-turned earth, partakes of the general character of its congener, and in

consequence never fails to attract the admiration and bespeak the sympathy of the Nile traveller. It is of very frequent occurrence throughout Egypt and sparingly found in Nubia.

26. *Sylvia melanocephala* (Sardinian Warbler). Bree.

This bird was another familiar acquaintance of the previous year, when I had found it in some abundance on the Cornice, among the pine forests and scrub at Cannes, and again in the woods and mountains above Bordighera. On the Nile I found it more abundant in Nubia than in Egypt, and it delighted in the dense lichen-covered shrubs of acacia or camel-thorn, with which in places the river banks are thickly lined. Unless it could be seen on the outside of these deep thickets, it was useless to fire, so impenetrable and tangled were those thorn-protected retreats; and when once this *sylvia* had retired within its recesses, as was its wont at the least alarm, the most persevering hunt and the most prying eyes would fail to discover its whereabouts, while no amount of noise would avail to dislodge it from its harbour of refuge.

27. *Sylvia hortensis* (Garden Warbler). Tem.
28. *Sylvia cinerea* (Common Whitethroat). Tem.
29. *Sylvia sylviella* (Lesser Whitethroat). Pen.
30. *Sylvia hippolais* (Chiff-chaff). Yar.
31. *Sylvia trochilus* (Willow Warbler). Yar.

I met with all of these well-known birds, more or less sparingly scattered over the country, and preserved a specimen of each as a guarantee of their identity with our British species.

32. *Cisticola schœnicla* (Fan-tailed Warbler). Tristram.

Two specimens of this charming little bird were the first-fruits of my ornithological campaign in Egypt. I found them amongst the dourra-fields at the port of Boulac a few miles outside the gates of Cairo, whither we had ridden to see the splendid museum of Egyptian antiquities formed by the Pasha under the direction of M. Mariette. These warblers were in considerable numbers among the young wheat plants, and from time to time one would rise from the ground, flutter away a few feet above the corn; then hover with vibrating wings, expanded tail and lowered head, and drop suddenly among the patches of wheat, or in the dwarf but thorny scrub which covers so much of the uncultivated land between the Nile and the

desert, where the loss of the cattle has compelled the discontinuance of the sakias, and consequently the non-irrigation and therefore infertility of the land.

33. *Drymœca gracilis.* Tristram.

This diminutive warbler was only met with among the palm-trees which encircle the Nubian capital, Derr. It was in the small irrigated gardens, attached to the outskirts of the city, if Derr may be dignified with so pretentious a title, and in the palm-trees with which they were bordered, that I found this tiny little bird, hopping from branch to branch, and peering about among the leaves, reminding me of our English tree-creeper, *certhia familiaris*, to which in general appearance it bears no little resemblance.

34. *Dromolea leucopygia.* Tristram.

35. *Dromolea leucocephala.* Tristram.

36. *Saxicola leucomela* (Pied Wheatear). Tem.

37. *Saxicola deserti.* Tristram.

38. *Saxicola isabellina.* Tristram.

The chats of Egypt are of great variety, and many of them in considerable abundance; moreover they are very puzzling to the ornithologist who here makes his first acquaintance with them. They occur most plentifully among the granite rocks of

Nubia just above Philæ, or perhaps they seemed more numerous from the sudden and strange transition from plenty to scarcity in numbers of the feathered race, which cannot fail to strike every traveller as he advances above the First Cataracts. Below in Egypt, birds had been so abundant, above in Nubia they suddenly become extremely scarce, the undoubted result of the great difference in the extent of cultivated land on either bank of the Nile, on which I have already remarked. For whereas in the one case, the breadth of fertile or irrigated land (for these words are synonymous) generally extends to a wide belt, if not a plain, in the other a mere strip is all that is available for husbandry, as I have already shown. And this will at once explain why birds of all sorts are so much more plentiful in Egypt than in Nubia. To this general rule however the chats must be singled out as the exception. They are essentially desert birds, frequenting the confines of the barren waste of sand, and never so much at home as among the rocks and boulders which strew the desolate tracks, as they extend far away from the river's brink. As it is extremely puzzling to distinguish the several species under their proper names, without some general guide, I will just point out roughly the

more prominent characteristics of their dress, whereby each may be readily recognized by the inexperienced: thus *leucopygia*, deriving its name from its colours, has a jet-black plumage and white rump and tail, the central tail-feathers alone partially black; and was the first of the genus which I saw in any numbers above the Cataracts. *Leucocephala* has also a glossy jet-black plumage; but in addition to the white rump and tail-coverts and tail, of which likewise the middle tail-feathers are partly black, has the crown of the head pure white, as the specific name implies. It is scarcely less common than the last, and abounds throughout Nubia. *Leucomela* possesses a black chin, throat, back, wings, and tip of tail-feathers; a white crown of the head, as well as general under-plumage; under tail-coverts rufous; it was found near Cairo, and occurred in suitable localities generally throughout the country. *Deserti* is of general sandy hue, befitting the colour of the wilderness, whence it takes its name, but with throat and chin more or less black, and wing- and tail-feathers dark brown inclining to black; it was met with both in Egypt and Nubia. *Isabellina* is of dark sandy colour above, and light sandy colour below; with tail-coverts white, and wings and tail-feathers dark brown, in-

clining to black; there is also a general pink tinge pervading the whole, which causes it so nearly to resemble the colour of the desert that it was difficult to distinguish it on the ground: it was seen in abundance both in Upper Egypt and Nubia. They all share in the general habits of the chat tribe, flirting their tails, and flitting from stone to stone, or from hillock to hillock after the restless manner of their European congeners, darting away with rapid flight at the first alarm, and generally on the alert for a foe; and this liveliness is especially pleasing amidst the solitudes of Nubia, where one may walk on the river bank for miles, without meeting any other living creature.

39. *Motacilla alba* (White Wagtail). Yar.
40. *Motacilla lugubris* (Sombre Wagtail). Bree.
41. *Motacilla flava* (Yellow Wagtail). Gould.

These were all the wagtails I met with on the Nile: *alba* is the very commonest bird in all Egypt, not excepting the red-throated pipit, to be next described. It may be seen in every field, and is very frequently depicted on the walls of the tombs, and may be also recognized amongst the hieroglyphics. *Lugubris* seems to be very local, and to be restricted to the district of the Cataracts alone: it is a fine

species, with distinctly marked plumage, the intensity of the black contrasting with the pure white of the under part, so as to give the bird a handsomer appearance than belongs to either *M. alba* or *M. Yar. ellii.* I had been prepared to find it at the Cataracts, and I was fortunate to see it there in some numbers, during our compulsory detention of nearly six days in ascending and returning. It appeared quite at home amidst the turmoil of the rapids, and it was curious to watch how it would run among the rocks and on the sand at the water's edge, and flit over the most boisterous falls and the most violent rushes, as if it took pleasure in the strife of waters and rejoiced in their maddened rage. I never met with it in any other locality, nor have I heard of its occurrence elsewhere on the Nile, but the Cataracts seem to be the westernmost limits of its range, for it is essentially an Asiatic species, and though it thus reaches the confines of Africa, and sometimes straggles into Eastern Europe, its home is the whole continent of Asia, where it supplies the place of our *M. alba* and *M. Yarrellii.* I only met with *M. flava* towards the end of the tour, as we came back to Lower Egypt; this may have been accidental, or it may have been away in winter quarters, as at about the same period I fell in with

several undoubted migrants on their return from more Southern haunts.

42. *Anthus rufogularis* (Red-throated Pipit). Brehm.

This bird shares with the white wagtail the honour of being the most common bird in Egypt, and is plentifully distributed over the whole country, more particularly abounding in the large open fields of corn and gardens which are under irrigation, and never met with beyond the cultivated land. In general habits it partakes very much of the character of the rock pipit, with which I am very familiar on the east coast of England, amid the muddy creeks and shores of the Wash. I am nearly certain that I recognized it in the hieroglyphics, though I do not like to speak very positively in regard to a form about which one might easily be mistaken.

43. *Alauda cristata* (Crested Lark). Yar.

Scarcely less common than the last, *A. cristata* takes the place in Egypt of its well-known congener *arvensis*, with which we are so familiar in England. It is however, though seldom seen with us, so common in France, that I need enter into no farther details about it.

44. *Ammomanes Isabellina* (Desert Lark). Tristram.

As we advanced into Upper Egypt, we met with this bird, which became more common as we went on towards the South. It is essentially a desert bird, loving to frequent either the cultivated land on the verge of the waste, or to bask on the surface of the desert itself. In colour it exactly resembles the sand on which it passes its life; and like the chat of the same name (*Saxicola Isabellina*), it can scarcely be distinguished by an unpractised eye from the warm-coloured sand in which it will crouch, until nearly trodden on.

45. *Emberiza cœsia* (Cretzschmäers Bunting). Bree.

On the very last day which I spent in Egypt, when I had packed up my guns and despatched them with my collection of skins to England, and was whiling away the hours of detention in Alexandria till a steamer was ready to start for Syria, I was wandering round Pompey's pillar, and examining the graves in the Muslim cemetery hard by, when this gaily-plumaged bird hopped leisurely among the stones of the graves and the branches of the trees adjacent. It was perfectly fearless, and, as if aware of my inability to capture it, allowed

me to come within a very few yards and watch it to my heart's content. I am surprised that it has not found its way into the catalogue of either Mr. Taylor or Dr. Adams, inasmuch as in Bree's 'Birds of Europe,' 'its principal home' is said to be 'in Syria, Egypt, and Nubia.' Certainly I never met with it until the very end of my sojourn in Egypt, and I cannot help fancying that it had then just arrived from its winter quarters in the South; but this is mere conjecture on my part.

46. *Pyrrhula githaginea* (Desert Trumpeter Bullfinch). Bree.

I frequently fell in with flocks of this beautiful little bird; and the light rosy plumage, and pink or carmine beak, the colour sometimes deepening to an orange red, render the species unmistakeable. I never saw it alone, but always in larger or smaller parties, which would rove from field to field, and settle together, after the manner of linnets. The first time I saw it was in the neighbourhood of Aboo-Girgeh, when wandering on the left bank of the Nile. I had laid my gun on the ground, and was examining with great curiosity a vast colony of black ants which were travelling on two parallel lines in immense numbers, the one line going out

unladen, the other returning with morsels of straw or stick or other burden in their mouths, and following one another in a continuous stream and the greatest order, but the two lines of outward and homeward bound never interfering with one another. I had followed up these armies of workmen some forty or fifty yards to the hole in a hillock from whence they issued and to which they returned, and which was evidently their home; and was admiring the regularity, order, and method of their march, and the diligence they showed, when a small flock of the Desert Trumpeter Bullfinch, or Vinous Grosbeak, as it has also been called, flitted past. The instant I caught sight of the rosy plumage—for I had been on the look-out for this pretty bird—ants and their discipline were forgotten, and I was in pursuit; but I had no difficulty in procuring as many specimens as I required, or indeed in selecting those in the brightest plumage, so tame and confiding, and withal so numerous, were these delicately-tinted birds. They were generally met with among the corn-stalks in the cultivated land, but sometimes on the rocks near the river, chattering, restless, and amusing, as they hopped from stone to stone, making the grey rocks glow with their bright plumage.

47. *Passer domesticus* (House Sparrow). Yar.

As in every other part of the known world, so in Egypt, this well-known cosmopolite seems quite at home, as bold and as saucy under tropical as under arctic skies.

48. *Passer salicarius* (Spanish Sparrow). Bree.

This handsome species may be frequently found associating with its better-known congener, to which it is closely allied in habits as well as in shape; indeed, so generally do they flock together, that if the gun be discharged at a flight, the victims will generally be found to belong pretty evenly to both species. It may easily be distinguished from its relative by the chestnut colour on the top of the head, and the black back and flanks.

49. *Sturnus vulgaris* (Common Starling). Yar.

One single specimen of this well-known bird I saw on my long donkey ride from Girghey to Abydos, and on no other occasion did I fall in with it again; neither could I learn that it had been seen by any travellers in the other Nile boats.

50. *Corvus corax* (The Raven). Yar.

Variety of temperature seems to be totally unheeded by the hardy Raven, which appeared as

active and alert under the tropical sun of Nubia as amidst the snow-clad rocks of Norway. Wherever the cliffs overhang the Nile, and offer a suitable home to these birds, there they may invariably be found.

51. *Corvus umbrinus* [?] (Brown-necked Raven). Tris.

I am not prepared to assert positively that the small raven which I shot amidst the palm-groves of Wady Halfeh belongs to this species, because I have hitherto been unable to submit it to the judgment of Mr. Tristram, who has worked out the corvidæ of Palestine in so masterly a manner;* but from a careful consideration of that gentleman's remarks, I entertain a strong opinion that my little raven must be *umbrinus* and no other. At all events I would call the attention of ornithologists to the probability of its existence in Egypt and Nubia, and beg those who have the opportunity to bring home more specimens of the smaller raven to be found there.

52. *Corvus frugilegus* (The Rook). Yar.

Here again I am obliged to speak doubtfully, inasmuch as this species is not included in either

* Ibis, new series, ii. 59–74.

of the lists of Egyptian birds given in the 'Ibis,' and I was never able to examine a specimen closely; but on two separate occasions when sailing up the river, I saw on the banks flocks of what I firmly believe to have been rooks; and about which I should have had no doubt, if the species had been enumerated by either Dr. Adams or Mr. Taylor in their lists of the birds of Egypt. I have the more confidence in my opinion since on mentioning my suspicions subsequently to my friend Mr. Chambers, who is also a member of the British Ornithologists' Union, and who has a good knowledge of birds, he declared that he too had observed what he firmly believes to have been rooks, corroborative testimony which very nearly strengthens my belief into positive conviction.

53. *Corvus cornix* (Hooded Crow). Yar.

To be seen every day in Egypt, on the shore, on the palm-trees overhanging the villages, on the sandbanks, in the river, wherever in fact any kind of food is likely to be found; since nothing of fish, flesh, fowl, or the lower orders of the animal kingdom, comes amiss to the insatiable appetite of this unclean omnivorous bird.

54. *Upupa Epops* (Hoopoe). Yar.

This is pre-eminently an Egyptian bird; for it occupies almost the same position among the mud cabins and palm-tree roofs of the villages, that the domestic sparrow does with our houses. Fearless, tame, and undisturbed by the natives, these graceful birds will flit with dipping undulating flight from the palms on which they pass much of the day to the field or river-bank, on which they will strut with graceful mien and erect crest, stalking over the ground with nodding plumes, and demeaning themselves as lords over the heaps of refuse on which they especially delight to take their stand. I never saw one molested by an Arab, and though they looked on unmoved when I occasionally shot a specimen, I think they had a worse opinion of the Hawager in consequence; but I must in justice to myself say that I declined to kill them for the table, notwithstanding the importunities of Braheem, contenting myself merely with a taste, which was quite enough to prove that the high repute in which its flesh is held is not undeserved. It is a most difficult bird to preserve, as the skin tears and the feathers fly out on the least provocation.

55. *Cuculus glandarius* (Great Spotted Cuckoo). Yar.

Though this is by no means an uncommon bird in Egypt, its acquisition gave me as much pleasure as some of far higher pretensions to rarity; it is of such graceful form; the drooping crest and the long tail give it so much elegance; and its plumage is of so marked a character and of so soft a texture that there is something especially captivating in its general appearance. Then it is one of the very rarest of our British birds, the occurrence of a single straggler in Ireland having sufficed to give it a place in Yarrell's invaluable book; and above all, I first met with it in such an enchanting morning's walk, that it always recalls to my mind peculiar delight. We were hoping in the course of the day to reach Thebes, from which we were distant only ten miles, and not a breath of air stirred the surface of the river, when the sun rose with full power, and the men were harnessing themselves to the tow rope to track from the bank and I had gone on shore for a couple of hours' shooting before breakfast. Striking inland from the river's bank, I soon found myself in the midst of irrigated gardens, laid out in patches amidst immense plantations of cotton and castor-oil trees.

Here and there gigantic palms (the largest of the race I had seen) reared their tall stems above my head; while sont-trees, sycamores, and tamarisks were scattered here and there in groups; and beds of onions and plots of dourra and other corn were sprouting from the hot steaming earth. The whole grove seemed alive with birds; Sénegal doves and blue pigeons were perched on every tree; hoopoes were strutting jauntily on the ground; bright green bee-eaters were darting to and fro like meteors in the brilliant sunshine; their emerald plumage glittering and almost dazzling the eye; hooded crows were hurrying away with their usual heavy gait and hoarse clamour; Sardinian warblers and many small birds were hopping among the branches of the castor-oil and cotton plants which were now in full blossom; and I had been staring in amazement at the departure of a flock of night herons from the top of one of the loftiest palms—of which more anon—when the dipping flight of the great spotted cuckoo, as it crossed an open glade, directed my whole attention to its capture. For a long time I followed it, through the thick foliage of the trees by which I was surrounded, now catching a glimpse of it as it flew off, now fearing I had lost it

altogether; when seeing it perched on the high top of a palm at a long distance, and doubting whether I could cross the intervening gardens without scaring it away again, I aimed at it with a green cartridge, and to my dismay saw it fly off towards the river apparently unhurt; but as I watched its departure with a sigh of regret—for it was the first of its species I had seen—I marked that its flight was unsteady, and then it began to tower in the air, and finally, just as I arrived breathless at the river's bank I saw it tumble headlong into the water, though with outstretched wings it managed to keep afloat. Fortunately the dahabeah was just then passing the spot, and my frantic gesticulations caused the reis to make a dash at the floating bird with a boat-hook, which, had it taken effect, must have infallibly demolished my specimen; but as he luckily missed it, and I still urged on the rescue, two of the sailors jumped into the sandal and cast off in pursuit; and now the rapid current had carried down the dying cuckoo so fast that those clumsy oarsmen would never have retrieved it, had not one, in anticipation of backsheesh, cast off his robe and turban, plunged into the water, and swimming as Arabs can swim, seized the prize and brought it safe to shore; when an hour's suspension

by the leg in a spare hen-coop on deck in the blazing sun, effectually dried its feathers, and made it the very respectable specimen it now presents in my collection. Subsequently I fell in with the Great Spotted Cuckoo at Esnè on the return voyage, when we were at anchor for twenty-four hours while the men baked; and I found it in some numbers in a large palm grove beyond the walls of the town. Here I had an opportunity of watching it for a considerable time, and certainly a more restless and a more garrulous bird I never met—it was always on the move from one branch to another, and always chattering. It appears to be very local, always to be met with in certain districts, and in others wholly unknown. It has been lately proved by English naturalists to have the same parasitic habits in breeding as those of its congener, so well known in England; the Hooded Crow (*Corvus cornix*) being the fortunate bird selected for the distinguished honour of becoming foster-parent to its young.*

56. *Centropus Senegalensis* (Strait-heeled Coucal).

Having noticed in Mr. E. C. Taylor's 'Ornithological Reminiscences of Egypt,' that this bird had

* Ibis, iv. 357, and v. 361.

been obtained by him, both my friend Mr. Chambers and I were constantly on the look-out for it, and very eager to secure it. Neither of us however was so fortunate as to meet with it alive; though in a grand overhauling of skins on board the 'Colleen Bawn' which we one day enjoyed, we saw a very handsome specimen of this much-prized Cuckoo, which had fallen to the gun of Mr. Hatfield, and had been preserved by his dragoman Sapienza.

57. *Crateropus acaciæ* (Adams).

I believe that I am right in assigning the specific name of *acaciæ* to the Bush Babbler which I procured in Nubia, for it seems in every respect to answer the description of the *Crateropus*, which Dr. Adams gives under that title, though I name it with some diffidence, inasmuch as Mr. Tristram had doubts about its identity, and has only determined that it is not *C. fulvus*. I met with it on one occasion only, and that at the farthest point of my journey southward, near the second Cataract, when a small party, consisting of four or five of this light sand-coloured bird, flew with jerking undulating flight into a sont-tree, near which I was standing unobserved by them, though they at once made their presence known to me by the incessant chat-

tering in which they indulged. A lucky shot secured two of them, and the others flew across a creek of the Nile to a wooded island. In flight, in garrulity, and in the soft fluffy texture of their plumage, they strongly reminded me of the *Garrulus infaustus* of Scandinavia.

58. *Merops viridis* (Egyptian Bee-eater).

This beautiful little bird, of the most brilliant green plumage, with its tapering curved beak and long forked tail-feathers is the most truly Oriental bird we find on the banks of the Nile. It is the only Bee-eater which winters in Egypt, and when its congeners are migrated to the South, it is still to be seen in great numbers among the palm groves and in the cotton plantations; and sometimes several are perched on a single spray, when one and another will dart away after the manner of a flycatcher, to hawk some passing insect, and return to the same branch. Very bright and gay do they look, when the sun shines on their emerald hues; and as they flit here and there, like sparkling gems, they bear no slight resemblance to the humming birds of other lands. It is with real regret that I see this charming little bird selected to grace the hats of English ladies after the present unfortunate

fashion; a practice I would add that can never be sufficiently condemned by all who take interest in the feathered race, inasmuch as it is productive of wanton and wholesale persecution, and bids fair very speedily to exterminate some of our birds of brightest and gayest hue.

59. *Merops Persica* (Blue-cheeked Bee-eater). Bree.

This is a much larger species than the last, and of very great beauty: it only arrived from its winter quarters a week or so before we left the country; and then was seen in small parties of eight or nine flying rapidly to and fro over the river bank, and uttering shrill cries as they darted along. It is curious that though essentially an inhabitant of the warmer parts of Asia and Africa, it occasionally straggles into Europe; whereas its more hardy congener last described, though not afraid to brave the winter even in Lower Egypt, has never yet been seen on the European side of the Mediterranean.

60. *Alcedo rudis* (Black-and-white Kingfisher). Bree.

Although not decorated with the bright hues of blue and green with which so many of its congeners are adorned this is a striking species from the

contrast of the two colours whence it derives its trivial name. Perched on a stone, or more often the mud bank of the river, or sometimes on a sand island in the middle of the stream, it patiently waits the moment for darting on its finny prey. I would often surprise it sitting thus motionless at the water's edge, either when rounding some corner of the river in the sandal, at whose extreme bow was my wonted place, or when, walking on shore, I appeared on a sudden on the bank above the stream. Then with a wild cry it would shoot away over the water, sometimes up the river, sometimes down, but frequently prolonging its flight across the whole breadth of the Nile. This species is admirably depicted in the ancient paintings which adorn the tombs of Beni Hassan, and which were executed nearly four thousand years ago.

61. *Hirundo rustica Orientalis* (Oriental Chimney Swallow). Schlegel.

Whether this is a true species, or only a variety, all the specimens of it which I handled in Egypt, or which I saw on the wing, had the under parts of a dark chestnut hue, instead of the sandy-white with which our British swallow is arrayed; and this is no slight difference, but one very marked

and decisive. The first specimens I met with were on the borders of the irrigated land near the Great Pyramids, and I shot some as examples; and I must say that to my mind they stand in much the same position with regard to their European congeners, as the Egyptian of brown hue and the Nubian of black complexion bear to their European brethren. To what that divergence may tend let the Ethnological and Anthropological Societies determine.

62. *Hirundo rupestris* (Crag Swallow). Bree.

This was an old friend which I had met the previous year on the Cornice, and I renewed my acquaintance soon after my arrival in Egypt in a remarkable locality: which was no other than the summit of the great Pyramid of Cheops. For as we reclined on the apex of that wonderful monument, basking in the warm sun, surrounded by chattering Arabs, and marvelling at the scene before us, crag swallows came darting about us, as if questioning our right to intrude on those isolated peaks, and wondering what brought us there. They were of a much lighter hue than our European specimens, and struck me as having a pink tinge, which I think belongs to many of the birds which frequent the desert and its confines, and which appears to

me to be a general characteristic of many Oriental and Southern varieties.

63. *Hirundo riparia* (Sand-martin). Yar.

Once only did I see the sand-martin, but then it was in countless numbers, skimming over the gardens and meadows of Elephantine, as we wandered over the island, followed by all the juvenile population of the place—the boys without a vestige of clothing, and a single lock of woolly hair on the forehead the only covering for their shaven heads; the girls with only a fringe of leathern thongs tied round their hips. We must have had an escort of at least fifty or sixty of these naked little niggers, as we sauntered amidst the ruins with which the island is studded; and though anxious to secure a specimen of the sand-martin for positive identification, I hardly ventured to fire, so surrounded was I with children. However, I obtained one at last, without committing murder; and as I find that Dr. Adams never met with it during his tour, and that it is not included in Mr. Taylor's 'Ornithological Reminiscences of Egypt,' and not alluded to by Mr. Allen, I presume its appearance in the country is exceptional; though whence came the vast multitude with which I fell in at Elephantine, and

whither they went, I cannot divine. I should mention that it was on our upward journey that I found them, as early as February 2, and therefore they could not be returned from their migration farther south, or I should surely have fallen in with them again.

64. *Cypselus apus* (Common Swift). Yar.

We saw this bird almost every day, sometimes in considerable numbers.

65. *Columba livia* (Rock Dove). Yar.

It is as impossible to define to what extent these birds in a state of semi-domestication swarm in Egypt, as it is to understand for what purpose they are thus protected and encouraged by the natives. That they must be very disagreeable and even offensive neighbours, living just above the huts of the fellaheen, in lofty upper stories which those good people take care to provide for them, admits of no doubt to the European judgment: that they must do enormous damage to the crops of corn, when they come down upon it in such vast flocks, is equally certain. And it seems quite incredible that such injury can be compensated by the manure they

furnish, which is generally alleged as the sole reason why they are so befriended. For their proprietors never seem to kill and eat them, nor do they sell them or their eggs; but yet, paradox upon paradox, they either looked on with indifference, or quite rejoiced, when they saw us shooting them in great numbers, and sending off to the boat as many as our attendant Arab could carry. Braheem was always asking me to shoot pigeons, as they helped the commissariat not a little, and generally appeared at breakfast as well as at dinner, and in those districts where they abounded, it was easy to obtain any quantity we pleased; and I see by my book that from 25 to 35 were the average results of a two hours' expedition against them. Shooting in this way for the pot we were not particular how we killed them, when feeding in flocks on the ground, as well as on the wing. Consequently we often made a large bag at a single discharge; but on one memorable occasion I far exceeded all other similar shots recorded on the Nile that season, when on the road to the temples of Abydos, having been charged by Braheem to procure '*Hammam*' (pigeons), and seeing a great number on the ground at a fair distance, I discharged a green cartridge into the midst, and we

picked up twenty birds which had fallen victims to that single barrel, besides sundry others which were wounded, and escaped into the tall lucerne hard by. This was not a little to the disgust of the sailor in attendance, whose basket was at once filled, and who had to carry his load through a weary tramp of near twenty miles, before we regained the boat in the evening. That the pigeon was well known in Egypt B.C. 2000, the paintings in the tombs of Beni Hassan show; and Sir Gardner Wilkinson in describing the picture of the coronation of Rameses on the walls of the great temple of Medinet Haboo, calls attention 'to the carrier pigeons, which, flying to the four sides of the world, are to announce the important fact to the gods of the South, North, East, and West.'

66. *Columba Ægyptiaca* (Egyptian Turtle-dove). Bree.

This is also called *Turtur Senegalensis* by some authors, is the *gumry* of the Arabs, and is very abundant in the palm groves and acacias. 'The latter (*Mimosa Nilotica*), is the sont-tree of the Arabs, and is said to be the shittim-wood of the Pentateuch, and next to the palm is the commonest tree in Egypt. From this the Turtle-dove may generally be seen peering with outstretched neck at the

intruder; and it is of so confiding a nature, as well as of such graceful form, that I seldom shot it for the table, although often importuned by Braheem to do so, and certainly it deserves the credit it enjoys of being remarkably good to eat. Its feathers are more loosely attached to the skin, and more easily fall off, than even any others of the dove tribe, though this is a peculiarity which belongs in some measure to the whole family. I had been assured from the first that it was almost impossible to skin it on that account, and Braheem told me that an American bird-collector, with whom he had travelled the previous year, had after many ineffectual attempts, pronounced it quite hopeless, and abandoned all farther efforts. I did succeed eventually, but only by dint of the greatest pains and caution and perseverance, and not till I had ruined several skins in fruitless attempts. As a proof of the very slight adherence of the feathers to the skin, I may state that in the case of the first specimen at which I fired at a fair distance with a very small charge of dust shot, all the tail and a large portion of the back feathers fell out in a perfect cloud, though the bird fluttered away a hundred yards before it fell; and such a forlorn naked specimen as I picked off the ground I never before beheld. I entertain

very great doubts whether there are not two distinct species of dove inhabiting the tangled trees of Nubia. I began to suspect this from varieties which I observed there, and fully intended to have investigated the subject; but I unfortunately postponed it till too late, when the only dove observed was that in the plumage ordinarily seen throughout Egypt.

67. *Pterocles exustus* (Singed Sand-grouse). Temminck.

The specific English name I give on Mr. Taylor's authority; as I was at a loss for its correct title. It is by no means uncommon in suitable localities. I fell in with it in some numbers below Sioot, and in the large plain near Kom-Ombos; but of all wild and wary birds this is the most difficult to approach. After we had carefully marked them down, walked round them in a large circle, and stalked them with the greatest care, long before we came within shot the whole pack would rise, and with a wild cry and on most rapid wing would fly off, nor alight again till a whole mile intervened between us. It is a very beautiful bird, and its yellow-brown plumage, dark mahogany vent, and long pointed tail combine to give it a most distinguished and aristocratic appearance. It is called '*gutta*' by the Arabs from

the noise it makes when alarmed, and '*gutta keteer*,' 'plenty of sand-grouse,' or '*gutta ma feesh*,' 'no sand-grouse,' are the assurances of the fellaheen, as you shoot over their lands, but which never suggested to our minds any idea of the scarcity or abundance of the bird in question, but only the willingness or unwillingness of the informant to accompany us on our walks, so inveterate is the Arab habit of untruth, and so little connection have the facts of the case with their positive assertions.

68. *Coturnix vulgaris* (Common Quail). Yar.

Though nowhere abundant, this bird is scattered over all the corn-fields of the country, and I generally put up one or two in my daily walks. The only locality in which I saw it in any numbers, was in the plain of Kom-Ombos mentioned above. It is of somewhat brighter plumage than our European bird, but the same may be asserted of many another denizen of these Southern latitudes. It is unmistakably depicted in some of the most ancient paintings which adorn the walls of the tombs.

69. *Œdicnemus crepitans* (Great Plover). Yar.

Occasionally I met with this well-known species in the open fields or on the river bank, but it was by no means a common bird. The only specimen I killed, differed in no respect from its British brother.

70. *Charadrius minor* (Little Ringed Plover). Yar.

No bird is more frequently seen on the shallows of the Nile than this: and wherever creeks and sheets of water have been left in the inland plains by the subsiding river, there the little ringed plover may invariably be seen, running along the water's edge, and busily engaged in searching the mud for food.

71. *Charadrius spinosus* (Spur-winged Plover). Bree.

This is *par excellence* the bird of the Nile; the well-known *Zic-zac* of the Arabs, and in all probability the true 'crocodile bird' or *trochilus* of Herodotus. It is very common, and its loud sharp note is constantly heard; moreover it is a fine bold species, of symmetrical shape, and erect carriage when on the alert, though when in repose on the river bank, it has the appearance of a man shrug-

ging his shoulders, so shortened is the neck, and so close does the head lie upon the breast. Strange indeed is the formidable spur, with which the carpal joint is furnished; out of the series of skins which I brought home, there was every variety of spur, from the long sharp point to the mere blunted knob, with which some wing bones were armed.

72. *Charadrius Ægyptius* (Black-headed Plover). Bree.

This beautiful little plover disputes with the last-named the honour of being the friend of the crocodile as described by Herodotus; it is not however included by Sir Gardner Wilkinson amongst the birds recognized on the sculptures and paintings, while *C. spinosus* is undoubtedly pourtrayed there. Moreover, to the latter, modern Arab tradition still assigns the task of leech-catcher to the king of reptiles, while to *C. Ægyptius* no such office is given. Therefore I think we must discard his claims in that direction, and he must sue for our admiration on other grounds. Nor has he far to seek for a plea in his favour, for there is no more beautifully marked bird on the Nile; and as it feeds on the water's edge and on the sandbanks in small parties of from two to five, it attracts the attention

of every tourist by the contrast of the glossy black of the upper plumage with the delicate ruddy hue of the lower portions, the pale slate-blue of the wings and legs, and the black collar which surrounds the breast. When I first met with them, a little above Benisooef, I thought I had never seen such handsome birds, and after watching them for some time I congratulated myself that I was so fortunate, as at a single discharge of my gun to secure the whole party of three, as they stood on a mud-bank projecting into the river. Subsequently I very often came upon them, but never without paying a tribute of admiration to their very elegant dress.

73. *Vanellus cristatus* (Peewit). Yar.

I fell in with one small flock of these birds near Dendera, and never saw an individual of the species on any subsequent occasion, at which I am surprised, as Dr. Adams describes it as common.

74. *Vanellus leucurus* (White-tailed Plover). Lichtenstein.

I was so fortunate as to obtain a single specimen of this very rare species, which is described by Mr.

Taylor as the greatest rarity he procured in Egypt, and which is not enumerated at all in the list of Dr. Adams. We were in Nubia, between Derr and Ibreem, and were nearing the shore in a dead calm that the men might track, when we came upon a small flock of four or five of this species, with whose form and name I was then wholly unacquainted, and which I have since found to be scarcely known in Europe. A snap shot from the deck stopped one of them, but its companions flew straight away into the desert, precluding all hope of following them, neither indeed did I then know what a prize I had secured. It arrests the attention of the ornithologist at once by its unusual length of leg, and its brown plumage so unlike that of any of its congeners. It is admirably figured and well described by Mr. C. A. Wright in the 'Ibis.'*

75. *Ardea cinerea* (Common Heron). Yar.

Multitudes of this bird throng the shallows, the creeks, and the sandbanks throughout Egypt; it may also be recognized on the walls of the ancient tombs.

* New series, vol. i. p. 459.

76. *Ardea russata* (Buff-backed Heron). Yar.

I was hardly prepared to find this white-robed species occupying the place of our sable rook, in following the ploughman as he turned up the soil, and in close attendance on the cattle grazing in the meadows. But so I found them employed on my first arrival in this country, when passing from Alexandria to Cairo in that memorable railway journey I have already described. And so we afterwards saw them continually on the river banks, associating in the closest familiarity with the cows and calves. My first specimens were obtained near the base of the Great Pyramid, when I shot a pair right and left as they rose from a creek of water left by the retiring river, by which feat I gained immense applause from my Arab attendant, who could scarcely contain himself in admiration at my marvellous skill; and as one of the birds had fallen into the water, threw off his robe, and plunged in after it with an ecstasy of joy. This species is the well-known 'paddy bird' of India, and is regularly pointed out by the dragoman on the Nile as the sacred ibis; and the unsuspecting traveller generally swallows the information without hesitation, as he is on the look-out for the ibis, which he knows

was always held sacred by the ancient Egyptians, and as he little dreams that it is never to be found within the precints of Egypt Proper, and in all probability never was seen in such northern latitudes in its wild state.

This is certainly a most remarkable fact, and the traveller feels staggered, and in a measure injured, by such a bold and unexpected assertion; but it is not to be disputed, as was pointed out by Lepsius, that not only many species of birds held as sacred in Egypt, and depicted in the hieroglyphics, but that also many other animals as well as plants which we constantly meet with in the sculptures and paintings had no home in such cold latitudes, but must have been brought from the southern portions of Ethiopia. I must however in candour acknowledge that Sir G. Wilkinson thinks such species were once common in Egypt, though he acknowledges they are now confined to tropical latitudes. But whether or not indigenous to Egypt, there can be no doubt that this bird was honoured by the inhabitants of that country with extraordinary reverence; nay, to so extreme a point did they carry their regard for it, that whosoever killed a sacred ibis, though involuntarily, could atone for such delinquency by nothing less than the sacrifice of his life.

This seems the place to observe that though I never met or expected to meet with *Ibis religiosa* alive, I brought home several specimens in a mummied state from the pits of Memphis and Thebes. The sepulture of these sacred birds varied in those two localities. Every ibis buried at Memphis was first embalmed, and then placed in a large oblong earthenware pot, with a rounded bottom, and a lid which was hermetically sealed on to the top with some kind of cement, and though some of these ibis pots when opened are found to contain nothing but dust and fibrous matter, the remains of the cloths in which the body was wrapped, the damp of the mummy pits having destroyed the rest; others, which have had the advantage of a drier resting-place, still contain the body entire. At Thebes the embalmed birds were not placed in such earthen receptacles, but like the mummies of other sacred animals—birds, crocodiles, &c.—were laid in order in the caves which served as their sepulchres, and still retain their form, and in fact their substance, the beaks bent down over the breast, and the legs folded to the body, and all enclosed in the multifarious bandages which are required in forming a correct mummy. I should add that not only the ibis may frequently be recognized in the

sculpture and paintings, but that the human figure of Thoth, the secretary of the great judge Osiris, is surmounted with the head and neck of that bird, which thus forms his invariable emblem.

77. *Ardea garzetta* (Little Egret). Yar.

Occasionally, but by no means frequently, I fell in with a solitary specimen of this most graceful little heron. With plumage of unspotted white, and of size nearly resembling the last described, *garzetta* is incomparably more elegant in form than its stouter congener, while the back, beak, and legs of the little egret form distinguishing marks which cannot be mistaken. I never saw it in company with another of its own species, or with any other bird, but always diligently employed in searching for food in the shallows in unfrequented places, the very type of a recluse who has banished himself from the world.

78. *Ardea nycticorax* (Night Heron). Bewick.

I could scarcely believe the evidence of my own eyes, when I first saw a flock of night herons take flight from the top of a lofty palm; and when I mentioned the fact soon after to an ornithological

friend, who had not at that time witnessed it, he laughed outright at my credulity, and felt satisfied that I had mistaken the bird altogether. However we were both accustomed to the sight before long, and when I had shot a bird in the act of sailing away from his resting-place, there was no room for farther dispute: moreover we found it was the regular practice of this species to pass the day on the tops of the trees, and many a colony did we subsequently scare away, in passing through a grove of palms; when they would rise in the air to a great height, and sail round in circles, and return again to their selected trees, when the coast was clear.

79. *Grus cinerea* (Common Crane). Yar.

On many occasions I watched this graceful bird through my glass by the half-hour; and I was never tired of admiring its majestic stately walk, as it deliberately marched across some distant sandbank —for it never allowed me to come within range. There is something quite imposing in the whole demeanour of this noble bird: it struts about with so commanding an air, arching its long neck, and striding so solemnly amidst the smaller waders, with which it was often surrounded, that it seemed a very

queen of the shallows. Then I would call to mind the exceedingly graphic account of the breeding of the crane in Lapland, than which I know no monograph more interesting,* written by the late lamented John Wolley, whom so many of us still look back upon with fond regret as our master in ornithology; and who, if he had lived, would for accurate and scientific knowledge of birds have acquired for himself a world-wide reputation second to none; and I recognized the cautious and suspicious glances which that wary bird would cast on every side, and the evident tokens of continual watchfulness which it perpetually exhibited, showing the same timidity, whether in its winter quarters in the far South, or in its breeding-places in the distant North. Though I never saw a large flock of cranes such as Dr. Adams describes, I have occasionally seen small parties of them, but more frequently a solitary bird or a pair: and though I tried to stalk some on the plains of Edfoo, I only had a very distant and ineffectual shot at them.

80. *Phœnicopterus antiquorum* (Rosy Flamingo). Bree.

To have seen this remarkable bird alive in its native haunts is alone enough to repay the ornitho-

* Ibis, i. 191-8.

logist for his long journey to Egypt, so peculiar is its form, so delicate its colour, so different is its general appearance to that of all others of the feathered race. But it was as shy and suspicious as the species last mentioned, and on the two occasions on which I was fortunate enough to see a flock, I was obliged to content myself with a good stare through my glass from the deck of the boat, while these strange birds preened their plumage, waded in the shallows, or moved with long strides over a distant sandbank; yet I considered myself highly favoured to catch even this distant view, inasmuch as many an Egyptian traveller has never fallen in with them at all. The specimens which came under my notice, varied in colour from a bright rosy red, for which one individual was conspicuous, through every gradation of cream colour with a dash of pink more or less pronounced, to a dull white, and even grey, which is the livery of the immature bird. I was told by the Honourable G. G. C. O'Callaghan, a most indefatigable sportsman on the Nile, whom I met afterwards in Syria, that he had found these birds very plentiful in the marshes of the Delta, more especially in the neighbourhood of Damietta; and I also saw a skin on board the 'Cecilia,' another trophy of Mr.

Harrison's gun, which I think came from the same locality, or at any rate from some marsh not far from the sea.

81. *Ciconia alba* (White Stork). Yar.

This species was continually seen on the shallows and sandbanks, often in immense numbers.

82. *Ciconia nigra* (Black Stork). Yar.

Though perhaps not quite so numerous as the last, this too was of very constant occurrence, and towards sunset many would be seen feeding in company with a multitude of waders of all denominations in perfect harmony, at which period of the day it was my delight to sit on deck, and watch them through the glass, while the magnificent sunsets for which the Nile is famous, gave additional zest to the scene.

83. *Platalea leucorodia* (White Spoonbill). Yar.

Also seen in great numbers, wherever sandbanks and shallows offered suitable accommodation.

84. *Ibis falcinellus* (Glossy Ibis). Yar.

I hesitate to assert positively that I met with the glossy ibis, though I feel pretty confident that I

cannot have been mistaken in the bird, of which on one occasion only I had a somewhat distant view. At all events this species is known to inhabit Egypt, though not (I imagine) in any numbers.

85. *Numenius arquata* (Common Curlew). Yar.

I should scarcely call this a common bird on the Nile, so far as my own observation is concerned, though I occasionally saw it on the mudbanks, or roused it from the fields.

86. *Totanus hypoleucos* (Common Sandpiper). Yar.

This and the little ringed plover are met with at every turn of the river, running on the mud at the water's edge.

87. *Totanus ochropus* (Green Sandpiper). Yar.

Scarcely I think so numerous as the last, but very common both in Egypt and Nubia.

88. *Himantopus melanopterus* (Black-winged Stilt). Yar.

I saw three of these birds on the edge of some shallow water a few miles above Luxor, and that was the only occasion of my meeting with them; though from what I learnt they are by no means

uncommon on the Nile, and even abundant in many parts of the Delta.

89. *Scolopax gallinago* (Common Snipe). Yar.

I saw this bird on only two or three occasions; and I never met with the jack snipe at all, though both are given in the lists as of frequent occurrence, and yet I was daily on the look-out in their most likely haunts: wherefore I conclude that, as in other countries, these birds are at one time scarce, at another abundant.

90. *Rhyncœa Bengalensis* (Painted Snipe). Gmel.

Though not so fortunate as to see this bird alive, I was shown a beautiful specimen which had been shot and preserved by Mr. Hatfield's dragoman Sapienza, who also informed me that in the Delta it was by no means uncommon, and that in previous years he had killed many. This was the only instance in which this gaily-marked species was met with by any of the sportsmen on the Nile in 1865, with whom I compared notes.

91. *Anser albifrons* (White-fronted Goose). Yar.

It would seem incredible, could I describe the vast flocks of anatidæ which literally cover the

sandbanks and shallows with which the Nile abounds. Of all the geese this appears to be the most common species, but it is very difficult of approach. '*Wiz kateer*,' 'plenty of geese,' is the greeting with which many a time some wily Arab, in hopes of backsheesh, has tried to decoy me under his guidance into the plains; but once only, I think, did such expeditions result in finding the objects of search; then, in the great plain of Edfoo, which is famous for the abundance of its water-fowl, there certainly was a small flock of *A. albifrons*, leisurely feeding on the fallows: but how to stalk geese on the open plain was a problem difficult of solution, and though I was able to advance by means of a friendly watercourse within a hundred yards, I fired to no purpose. Geese are frequently represented in the hieroglyphics, and that they were much sought after by the fowlers of ancient days, is clearly proved by the paintings in the tombs of Beni Hassan and El Kab.

92. *Anser Ægyptiacus* (Egyptian Goose). Yar.

I need not say that this beautifully-marked species is found on the Nile. Once I saw a large flock of eighty-five birds which settled on a sandbank near which we were at anchor, but otherwise

I never saw it in large flocks, like its congener mentioned above; neither is it by any means so numerous; though a small party of four or five may frequently be seen. It is very wary, and it is only by coming suddenly upon it from the bank, or by dropping down noiselessly upon it in the sandal, that the sportsman has much chance of success. This species is also undoubtedly figured in the sculptures, as Sir G. Wilkinson shows, and was as certainly the *vulpanser* of Herodotus,* as Dr. Adams points out.

93. *Anas boschas* (Wild Duck). Yar.
94. *Anas acuta* (Pintail Duck). Yar.
95. *Anas clypeata* (Shoveler). Yar.
96. *Anas crecca* (Teal). Yar.
97. *Anas Penelope* (Wigeon). Yar.
98. *Anas leucophthalmos* (Ferruginous Duck). Tem.

Though I was frequently watching through my glass the vast multitudes of ducks which thronged the sandbanks in Upper and Lower Egypt, and distinguished to my own satisfaction all the species I have enumerated, I should scarcely have ventured to certify their occurrence, did I not observe that I am corroborated in every instance by one or other

* Book ii. chap. 72.

or all of the lists to which I have so often called attention. There were many other species, in addition to those I have enumerated, upon whose identity I speculated with more or less assurance of correctness; but I will not run the risk of deceiving the reader by guesses which I could not verify, though I call his attention to the fact that I have not here specified one half of the species of *anatidæ* which cover the mudbanks of the Nile in such countless numbers.

99. *Pelecanus onocratulus* (White Pelican). Bree.

Seen at a distance, feeding among the smaller natatores like giants amid pigmies, the Pelicans have very much the appearance of swans. They are the largest of the feathered tribes on the Nile, and it is a grand sight to watch these huge birds flying heavily above the water, or busily engaged on the sandbanks. In suitable localities they are quite numerous, and we often saw several flocks in the course of the day. I shall never forget a pelican chase which I had one early morning just after sunrise; which though unsuccessful was most exciting. I was gazing at the rising sun, with my head out of the cabin window, while the dahabeah floated lazily down the stream in a dead calm, when

I noticed at the distance of about a quarter of a mile ahead, four of the finest pelicans I had seen, gently swimming down the river. I could already see the rosy tinge with which they were all flushed, and one in particular looked quite brilliant in the morning sun. Hastily ordering two men to get ready the sandal, while I hurried on a few clothes and loaded my gun with green cartridges, I was soon in hot pursuit, taking my station at the extreme bow, and ordering the men to pull hard but noiselessly, and not to chatter; a command which no Arab can obey, and for which I had to reprove and to threaten during this short trip. We soon neared the birds; at first they paid no attention to our approach, but as we gained upon them rapidly, they began to swim fast down the stream. Then the race began in earnest; my Arabs pulled their hardest, the pelicans seemed disinclined to rise, and swam with all their might, and it was not till we were within eighty yards of them, that these huge monsters slowly rose one by one from the water, and flew off, spreading out an immense target for my aim, but a target of such stiff feathers as not even a wire cartridge could easily penetrate. Of course I fired both barrels at the largest and rosiest of the four, which I had from the first

singled out for attack, but equally of course my shot made no impression, and they flew down the river with long heavy beats of their wide wings, and I saw them no more. And so it was with all my attempts to shoot a pelican; which, though occasionally killed by a smooth-bored gun, when a lucky chance surprises one at close quarters, requires a rifle for ensuring success. But it was a fine sight to watch these magnificent birds through the glass, as in the afternoon they began to move towards their fishing-grounds from the sandbanks on which they stood all day, gorged with the meal of the previous night, and resting, and basking in the hot sunshine. The pelican is easily distinguished among the birds represented in the sculptures and paintings on the walls of the temples and tombs.

100. *Phalacrocorax carbo* (Common Cormorant). Yar.

Up to at least four hundred miles from the sea, if not beyond that distance, these birds which we are apt to consider altogether marine, follow the course of the Nile. In some places where precipitous cliffs rise perpendicularly from the water, and offer suitable ledges for roosting, as at Gebel Aboofayda near Manfaloot, they abound in great numbers, and small parties of four or five might at all

times be seen flying over the water with outstretched neck, to and from their station.

101. *Larus ridibundus* (Black-headed Gull). Yar.

I am obliged to confess that I am not quite satisfied whether or no this is our common *L. ridibundus*, or whether it is the Mediterranean species figured in Bree as *L. melanocephalus*, for I have not been able to send it for Mr. Tristram's opinion; at all events it very much resembles our well-known species. I procured two specimens, one of which I shot as it rose from the sacred lake or reservoir at Karnac, and the other I killed far up in Nubia, at least seven hundred miles from the sea coast, as with a small party of its congeners it flew over our boat. I was astonished to find this bird so far from salt water; for, though well aware that gulls often come inland, and pass much of their time on the fallows and meadows, yet this is generally within an easy flight from the shore; but at this distant point they must have taken up, if not a permanent, at all events a temporary residence in the interior; and contented themselves with such a diet as fresh water alone can produce.

So far I am able to identify the birds I saw on

the Nile. There are however several species which I had an opportunity of observing, but which I am wholly at a loss to name; as neither in the collections at the British Museum, which I have examined for the purpose, nor in any ornithological books to which I have had access, have I been able to find specimens answering to those I saw.

102. The one to which I will first allude, was a large wader, which was unconcernedly feeding at the water's edge, as we sailed past with a brisk breeze near Sabooa in Nubia, and to which Braheem in great excitement directed my attention while we were at breakfast. He called it the 'great brown ibis,' and said it had been pointed out to him, on a former voyage up the Nile, as one of the rarest of Egyptian birds. As I rushed on deck to see this strange fowl, there, sure enough, was a large dark-coloured wader, of chocolate hue, with a long bill, not unlike that of an ibis; but it was as large as a spoonbill, and had bright yellow legs. As it chanced to be Sunday, when of course the guns were laid aside, I made no effort to obtain it, though I looked wistfully at it through the glass as long as it remained in sight.

103. Another unknown species was likewise a wader of still larger dimensions, and was amongst

a small collection of skins which I examined on board another boat. It was a very tall bird, grey in plumage, and was conjectured by the fortunate possessor to be a crane, though this was clearly a mistake. Its chief peculiarity lay in the beak, which was of the most extraordinary form: each mandible was nearly round, and I can liken it to nothing else than two sticks or withes laid one upon another. At the basal portion of the upper mandible, and extending up the forehead over the eyes, was a large naked patch of skin, of a brilliant red colour. I have never seen anything like it before or since, and am quite at a loss to conjecture to what genus it can belong.

104. A third species which I saw, and which I cannot identify, was either a small crow or a jackdaw of jet-black plumage. I was coming out of the famous rock-hewn tombs of El Kab, when on the cliffs just above my head, two of these little corvidæ were perched. Unluckily I had no gun in my hand, or I might have solved the mystery.

105. A fourth species which was perfectly new to me, and which I cannot name, I also met with on a Sunday, near the temple of Sabooa in Nubia. Here again there were two in company, small birds of a pale slate-grey colour, but I cannot

even attempt to define the family to which they belong.

106. 107. In addition to these there were certainly two, if not more species of gulls which I saw in numbers near Alexandria.

108. But the most amazing and at the same time provoking sight, was in the neighbourhood of Benisooef, when within seventy miles of Cairo on the return voyage. We were sailing before a strong khamseen wind all day at a great pace, and presently on the left bank of the river stood, like a long file of soldiers, above five hundred, as near as I could count them, large elegant grey-plumaged waders, with black heads, very long legs, and having very much the appearance of diminutive cranes. Scarcely had I recovered from this apparition, and the regret attendant on the impossibility of procuring a specimen, when, rounding a bend in the river, and coming out on another reach, I beheld both banks literally lined with an immense army of from a thousand to twelve hundred of the same bird. A few stragglers flew across the river ahead of the boat, and at them I discharged a cartridge, though at an impossible distance; when immediately the whole sky was filled with a cloud of birds, uttering a sharp cry. This almost sounds

like the troubled dream of an enthusiastic ornithologist; but I saw it in broad daylight, and it was a spectacle I shall never forget. Neither here again can I form any idea of the true name of these most elegant waders.

These are all the birds I can speak of from personal observation during my tour in Egypt and Nubia: they are enough however, I think, to prove what a rich field for the ornithologist those countries present. I have now enumerated one hundred and eight species, some of them of considerable rarity; but in addition to these, there are others of which I was told by those who had seen them, as the 'double-bearded falcon' (*Falco biarmicus*), the 'common kingfisher' (*Alcedo ispida*), the 'ruddy shieldrake' (*Tadorna rutila*), the 'avocet' (*Recurvirostra avocetta*); but as I did not meet with them, I forbear to insert them in my list. There are many others again, of which I did not hear during my stay in the country, but which are included in the lists of Mr. Taylor, Dr. Adams, and Mr. Allen, and therefore of whose occurrence I can entertain no doubt. Moreover a large proportion of the species encountered on the Nile, are either of comparative rarity or wholly unknown in the

British Isles, so that I have confidence in repeating at the conclusion of this volume, the assertion with which I set out, that the Nile and its banks do offer extraordinary attractions to the ornithologist.

It may be found useful, if I append a few hints and a little practical information for the benefit of the intending bird collector, as many have been wofully disappointed, and expressed deep regret at having omitted to bring from England what was essential to their success; and I may add once for all, that no dependence can be placed on supplying the most ordinary requirements of the European in any Eastern city; therefore let the sportsman and ornithologist beware, since, though the general wants of the traveller pertain only to mere matters of luxury or comfort, which may without serious inconvenience be omitted, the state of his ammunition and shooting appurtenances are all-important to the ornithologist.

In addition to the double-barrelled gun, I strongly advise a small rifle to be taken; shot of every size can be purchased in Alexandria or Cairo as well as in England; but a good supply of Eley's green wire cartridges should be sent, also an ample

store of wads and copper caps; and above all, let me earnestly advise the tourist to put himself in early communication with the P. and O. Company's agents, with reference to the forwarding in well-soldered tin cases of a sufficient store of gunpowder of the best quality. The intending passenger will be told, and with perfect truth, that English gunpowder can be obtained in Cairo, but let me assure him, that the article made expressly for exportation is a very different thing from that provided for home use, and as vexations and disappointments without end are certain to ensue from powder of inferior quality and of little strength, it is worth while to submit to all the annoying obstacles, the extra charge, the tedious delays, and the stipulated precautions of the agents of the P. and O. Company, in order to insure an ample supply of the best English powder, upon which his success in shooting so much depends, and which cannot be replaced, when once he has left home. But if this is driven off to the last moment, as so often happens, and no previous correspondence on the subject has taken place, the traveller will find to his intense annoyance that the powder he proposes to take is rejected by the managers of the Company, and he is condemned to rely upon the very inferior article he can procure

in the East. Therefore I repeat with redoubled earnestness, let the traveller apply in good time to the Company's agent for information, and follow up the directions given for forwarding, according to regulation, the requisite supply of powder to Alexandria.

The implements required for preparing the skins of birds are very few in number: indeed my good old friend, and deeply lamented instructor in the art of taxidermy, the late Mr. Waterton, used to avow that a small penknife was the only instrument needed; and when I was last at Walton Hall, he gave me such a knife as he always used, and a skein of fibrous grasses, and a few skewer-like thin modelling sticks which he had brought from Demerara, and with these he declared any bungler in the art ought to be content. As however none that I have ever met, possess the delicacy of touch, the artistic skill, and perhaps the practice, and certainly the mastery of the science which my dear friend possessed, I would suggest that there be added two or three scalpels of various sizes, some curved as well as straight scissors, a supply of cotton-wool or tow, which can with greater ease be sent from England than purchased in Cairo, and a small quantity of powdered plaster of Paris

(*plâtre tamisé*, if it be procured in France), for sprinkling over the skin and flesh when divided, and thus preventing all soiling of the feathers. Above all, a sufficient supply of arsenical soap should be taken, for which I offer the following excellent receipt, and which I have proved to be most efficacious:

'℞ Arsenious Acid, 8 oz.
Tinct. Carbonate of Potash,
Unslaked lime, 1 oz.
Camphor, 10 drams.
Hard white soap, 8 oz.
Distilled water, 8 oz.

The arsenic, potash, and water to be heated till dissolved; then add the soap, and dissolve, and when the mixture is tepid, mix in the lime and camphor.'

My friend Mr. Chambers, who had made a previous ornithological campaign on the Nile, had the forethought to purchase at Malta a very small light skiff, just large enough to hold him and sometimes a companion when required, though then it was somewhat overweighted; and in this he could follow up the birds far more rapidly, and with far less commotion than attended the sandal and the chattering Arabs who man it. Occasion-

ally he would put up a little sail, and sail before the wind in his tiny craft: at other times he would pull with a small pair of sculls in full chase after water-fowl and waders, or paddle gently down the stream. I mention it here as it is well worth the attention of those who hope to shoot in Egypt, as undoubtedly of enormous assistance in stalking birds on the sandbanks, which can scarcely be approached in any other way.

And now it only remains for me to wish my readers every success and *bon voyage*, to touch with the tips of my fingers my lips and forehead, make my salaam after true Oriental style, and retire.

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